On the Long March as Guard to Chou En-lai

By Wei Kuo-lu

FROM October 1934 to October 1936, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, led by the great leader Chairman Mao, undertook the world-renowned 25,000-li (12,500-kilometre) Long March. *On the Long March as Guard to Chou En-lai* is the revolutionary memoirs of Wei Kuo-lu, who was Vice-Chairman Chou En-lai's guard during this period. In simple and concise language, the author narrates details of his own life, work and education at the side of Vice-Chairman Chou during the years 1933-36. The author writes from his own experience and feelings, movingly describing from many different angles Vice-Chairman Chou's devoted and continuous work for the victory of the Chinese revolution. Essentially, this book reflects Vice-Chairman Chou's loyalty to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, his noble character of wholeheartedly serving the people and his fine spirit of hard work and plain living.

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By Wei Kuo-lu

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I Become Vice-Chairman Chou's Guard

In the autumn of 1933, our Party held the Second Meeting of Soviet Representatives at Juichin, the Red capital in Kiangsi Province. A big sports meet was held at the same time, including such events as marksmanship, track and field and various ball games. It was very exciting. At the time I was in the guards corps of the State Security Bureau and was posted as guard at the Representatives Meeting. On the last day of the meeting one of the Party leaders, a man with a long beard, made a very impressive political report. I felt a deep respect for this man as he seemed so well informed, and I wondered who he was. He did not look very old, even with his long beard. When I later inquired among some other comrades, I learned that he was Comrade Chou En-lai, Vice-Chairman of the Military Council of the Party's Central Committee.

One day in June 1934, not long after I had been posted to the State Security Bureau, Commander Li came up to me and said I was being transferred to General Headquarters to work, and asked me how I felt about it.

When I asked him what my work would be there, his only reply was a shake of his head. He was not sure, but said that I would find out when I got there.

I was anything but pleased with his answer. I thought that since he was the one who had notified me of my transfer, he certainly knew what work I was to do there, that he just didn't want to tell me. Then I thought there might be

a reason for him not telling me. When we were given lectures on classified information in the State Security Bureau, we were often told, "Don't pry for classified information, and guard against carelessness in your speech." So I replied dejectedly, "All right, I'll obey orders and go wherever I'm sent."

Commander Li could see I was not very happy and said with a smile, "Don't be upset! This was a sudden decision, and I really don't know why you're being sent to General Headquarters." After a moment he added, "Anyway, I think you'll be made a guard for one of the Party leaders."

That afternoon, after packing up my simple kit, I set off for General Headquarters with a letter of introduction. I kept wondering which Party leader I would be guard to, and what type of work would I be doing? Would I be up to it? . . . I was so preoccupied with my thoughts, even to the extent of wondering what type of gun I would be issued with, that I did not get a wink of sleep all night.

The next morning a staff-officer told me that I had been assigned to guard Vice-Chairman Chou and that he would take me to see him immediately.

"Vice-Chairman Chou?" All my doubts vanished in an instant. Excitedly pointing to my chin, I asked the staff-officer whether Vice-Chairman Chou was the one with the long beard.

"Yes," he replied. "Do you know him?"

"Yes, I do," I proudly declared. "Last year I heard him make a report at the Second Meeting of Soviet Representatives."

"Were you a representative?" the officer asked, surprise on his face.

I quickly explained that I was a guard at the meeting.

The staff-officer took me to the Vice-Chairman's office. Vice-Chairman Chou was at his desk examining some documents. His appearance had not changed at all since I last saw him, except for his grey uniform, which was now more worn out and faded. After the staff-officer had told the Vice-Chairman that I was the newly assigned guard, he went on to talk about some other matters. While they talked, I scanned the office. It was a typical Kiangsi-style room, not large but very well ordered and clean. The furnishings were simple: a few chairs; two desks, one with books, papers and magazines on it, the other for work, with a few writing brushes in a holder and a large brass ink-box. I was impressed how the Vice-Chairman who put all his energy into working for the revolution lived as simply as the rest of us.

When the staff-officer finished what he had to say and left, my train of thought was broken. I was left alone with the Vice-Chairman and felt quite ill at ease. The Vice-Chairman tidied up the things on his desk and then looked me over, asking me with a smile what my name was. I answered, "Wei Kuo-lu."

He stepped out in front of me and asked, "What unit have you been transferred from?"

"From the State Security Bureau."

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"Are you a member of the Party or the Youth League?"

I answered that I was a Party member. Though I felt a little embarrassed at answering, I was at the same time happy and felt at ease. After I had answered all his questions, I looked up and saw him nodding in satisfaction. He then called in the guard who was standing at the door, a comrade named Fan Chin-piao.

"You two can work out your respective duties between yourselves. When you don't have any work to do you should study. All right, show Comrade Wei to his quarters."

I saluted and followed Comrade Fan out of the office.

I had not been at General Headquarters long when I noticed that Vice-Chairman Chou was going to meetings nearly every day. I did not know what was so important as to necessitate meetings for days and nights on end. In mid-September, after the meetings had been going on for about a month, I discovered that in every section of General Headquarters documents were being burnt late into the night for several nights running. I was sure that there was a connection between the meetings and the burning of documents. This meant that there was either going to be a battle or some other major activity, though no one said a word about what was going on. On the surface, everything went on as usual. Even the vegetable patch planted by the office workers of General Headquarters was tended as usual. . . .

In the end our suspicions were confirmed. Because Wang Ming had taken control of the Party Central Committee, and was carrying out a "Left" opportunist line, our revolutionary forces had suffered many losses and the Red Army was forced to evacuate the base and undertake the Long March.

At the beginning of October, Vice-Chairman Chou called Fan Chin-piao and me into his office and said we were to get ready to leave. He said that we would be marching a long distance, everything that was not absolutely essential was to be returned to the Supply Department. This was a worry, for what did the Vice-Chairman use that was not essential? He only had two blankets, a quilt, and the cover he put his change of clothes and a grey sweater into

to make a pillow. Although the big brass ink-box in his office was very heavy, it was indispensable. In the end, all we could really get rid of were the old books, papers and magazines on the desk.

Soon everything was ready, and on the afternoon of October 18 we set out from Juichin in the direction of Yutu. That marked the beginning of the world-renowned Long March.

Severe Punishment for Arsonists

In November 1934, the Red Army reached a Miao-nationality region in Kwangsi Province.

As soon as we got into that area a strange thing started happening: fires broke out in or around our camp nearly every night for more than ten days. Though they started in the army camps, the fires would quickly spread to the Miao people's houses, which were made of thatch and wood, and cause a lot of damage. These fires became our greatest enemy, for not only did they endanger our army, they destroyed much Miao-nationality property and damaged our relations with the Miao people. Though the army and civilian organizations set up fire-prevention and fire-fighting squads to keep the problem in check, still we were all very edgy, and everyone was on the alert for fires or any enemy activity.

On one occasion we were camped at Lungpingchen, a medium-size, well-ordered market town where people of the Chuang nationality lived.

Vice-Chairman Chou had had little chance to rest since the Long March began, and he went to bed quite early that first night in Lungpingchen. After he had eaten and retired, we also went to bed. Tired out by the long day's march, I was soon fast asleep.

At about midnight, I was suddenly wakened by the shouts of the sentries and the crackling sound of fire. I leapt from my bed and rushed to the door. The house where Vice-

Chairman Chou was staying was in flames! The fire was spreading quickly and clouds of smoke billowed out of the doors and windows. I grabbed a blanket for protection and ran into the house. The place was full of smoke and flames and I could barely see a thing. The Vice-Chairman was already out of bed and I quickly led him out of the house, which was soon a blazing inferno.

Out of danger now, the Vice-Chairman sent us to see how the other leaders were and check on the situation in the rest of the camp. Just as we were about to go, the other leaders arrived posthaste, obviously concerned for Vice-Chairman Chou's safety. They began to study the cause of the fire, and ordered the troops to keep on the alert and strike at the class enemy's sabotage.

The streets were filled with people. Some were fighting the fire, others looking for people and moving things, while others were helping people save their property from the fire. . . . Comments about the origin of the mysterious fire could occasionally be heard above the din: "Whose carelessness is responsible for this fire?" "I think this fire was started by the enemy," etc.

Just then Vice-Chairman Chou came along and told me to find the staff-officer for operations. I should tell him to keep everyone on alert, double the sentries and have all those who were off duty assemble and await orders.

When I came back from seeing the staff-officer, I found some of the Party leaders including Comrade Teng Fa, Director of the State Security Bureau, standing outside holding a meeting in the open. Vice-Chairman Chou was saying, "Yes. I'm sure this fire was started by the enemy. The reactionaries want to use this type of despicable incident as proof of their slander that 'the Communists kill people and start fires,' hoping to upset and damage our

relations with the masses. . . . We must find the arsonist and uncover this plot!"

That night after the meeting, three suspicious-looking characters were picked up in Lungpingchen. After an investigation by the security department, it was discovered that they were criminals hired by the Kuomintang and sent as agents disguised as Red Army soldiers. It was they who had set all the fires.

The next day, after discovering the cause of the fires and capturing those arsonists, the State Security Bureau held a mass meeting in the town at which the policy of the Red Army was explained and the enemy's plot fully exposed. The people were incensed at learning the facts behind the fire, and they demanded that the three culprits be executed on the spot. After this was done, Vice-Chairman Chou instructed the Supply Department to investigate the situation of the arson victims and give appropriate assistance.

The enemy's demoniac plot was uncovered and the Red Army heightened its awareness of the many dangers that lay along the road of the 25,000-li (12,500-kilometre) Long March.

Husking Rice

In December 1934, the Central Red Army reached Kweichow. The Kuomintang reactionary propaganda and disruption by local reactionary forces made the people hesitate to approach us at first, and we often found villages empty. Added to this was the more crucial problem of food. Even water mills and stone grinders, essential for our rice-husking, had been hidden or destroyed on the orders of the enemy, who hoped to starve out the Red Army soldiers and end the Long March.

One day, when we had set up camp, we were able to obtain some unhusked rice. But without anything to grind it with, we still went hungry. Some comrades were so tired by the day's march that they simply lay down and went to sleep when they saw there was nothing to eat. Vice-Chairman Chou was very worried by this problem and decided to hold a meeting of cadres. He said, "We can't let the men go hungry, we must get every comrade something to eat. If there's nothing to grind the rice with, then we'll have to get everyone to use stones and pieces of tile and husk it by hand!" It was agreed that every man was to husk enough rice for three meals.

After the meeting, Vice-Chairman Chou had me find him two pieces of tile, and he got his share of rice and began to husk it himself. I thought how busy he was with other things, and said to him, "You needn't bother with this. We'll do your share."

Without raising his head he asked, "Why shouldn't I husk rice too?"

With utter conviction I said, "You're a Party leader and you've got more important work to do!"

"It's precisely because I am one of the leaders that I should be husking rice." As he spoke he raised his head and, seeing my troubled expression, said consolingly, "I'm the one who suggested that everyone husk the rice by hand, so shouldn't I also take part?"

What more could I say?

Following Vice-Chairman Chou's call to husk rice by hand, everyone went to work with tiles or stones, and some with only their bare hands. We continued to work on cheerfully even if we got blisters and cuts. After two hours of strenuous work we had overfulfilled our plan and had plenty of rice to eat. Later, when the people of the village saw for themselves that we paid fairly for what we bought, observed discipline, spoke politely and that we did not beat or swear at people, they no longer believed the lies spread about us by the Kuomintang reactionaries.

At Tsunyi

It was early January 1935. After crossing the treacherous Wuchiang River and defeating two divisions of the warlord Hou Chih-yen's forces, we headed straight for Tsunyi, the second largest city in Kweichow Province.

During our march, there was a constant fall of light mist-like rain, bearing out the saying: "There are not three clear days in a row in Kweichow." Though the rain was not heavy, it soon turned the dirt roads and paths we were walking on into mud, making it very hard going for us. Vice-Chairman Chou used a stick and marched along in his soaking clothes like the rest of us. The whole area was hilly; as soon as we struggled over one hill we would come across another. Going uphill was difficult enough, but going down was much more so. Sticks were of little use to us, one careless step resulting in a slippery fall and we were all soon covered in mud.

Three days after crossing the Wuchiang River we received some news from the troops up ahead: Our spearhead force had captured Tsunyi. This good news gave us all new energy and we quickened our pace. By morning the rain had stopped and the sun, of which we had seen so little up to now, appeared in the east. The good weather added to our feeling of elation as we headed towards Tsunyi.

When we were about two or three kilometres from the town, an order came from up front: tidy up and prepare to enter the city. We threw away our walking sticks and

scraped the mud from our clothes. Some men even changed into fresh uniforms. Spruced up and in orderly ranks, our troops looked very smart and impressive as we set off into the city.

It was already afternoon when Chairman Mao, Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh, Vice-Chairman Chou and the other leaders entered the city. Bright slogans covered its walls, and the people lining the streets applauded. At intervals from the crowds came the shouting of slogans: "Long live the Communist Party of China!" "Warmly welcome the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army!" Our proud force entered the city in well-ordered ranks, singing the militant song "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention."* It was the first time since we left the Central Base Area in Kiangsi Province to begin the Long March that we experienced such a feeling of harmony between the army and the people.

Tsunyi was a flourishing commercial centre on the road from Kweiyang in the south to Chungking in the north. It was divided into the new and the old cities, the new city being the main business district and the old city the residential quarter. The army command and guards lived in the old city. We were billeted in a beautiful roomy house said to have been the residence of the warlord Po Hui-chang, a terror in Kweichow. We had converted it into the temporary office of the Red Army General Headquarters. That night, after settling in we prepared a room for Vice-Chairman Chou to sleep in. The room we fixed up was in a mess, with things strewn all over the place, a sign of the great haste and disorder in which the previous occupant had fled.

The Central Committee used the breathing space afforded by our victorious entry into Tsunyi to hold an enlarged meeting of the Central Political Bureau in order to save the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and the Chinese revolution. At this meeting Chairman Mao carried out a resolute struggle against the "Left" opportunist line in the Party. The Chairman's correct political and military line was reaffirmed and taken as the basis for the Red Army's operations. The influence of the third "Left" opportunist line in the Central Committee led by Wang Ming was ended and the new leadership of the Central Committee with Chairman Mao as head was established. This was a change of the greatest historical importance for the Party, for it saved the Red Army, the revolution and the Party itself. It also ensured the successful completion of the Long March. From this time on we would march from victory to victory under the wise leadership of our great leader Chairman Mao, and this was vital for the Chinese people and the revolutionary people of the world.

Vice-Chairman Chou, like the other Party leaders, was so busy day and night during this meeting that he forgot all about food and sleep. When he was not in a meeting or otherwise busy, there were invariably streams of people wanting to speak with him and ask his advice. Witnessing the constant hard work and bitter struggles our leaders engaged in, our admiration for Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Chou and the others grew. We understood and appreciated their devoting all their strength and effort into correcting the mistakes of Wang Ming's "Left" opportunist line and changing the trend of the Chinese revolution.

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*The Three Main Rules of Discipline: (1) Obey orders in all your actions; (2) Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses; and (3) Turn in everything captured. The Eight Points for Attention: (1) Speak politely; (2) Pay fairly for what you buy; (3) Return everything you borrow; (4) Pay for anything you damage; (5) Don't hit or swear at people; (6) Don't damage crops; (7) Don't take liberties with women; and (8) Don't ill-treat captives.

After the Tsunyi meeting, the Central Red Army, under the wise leadership of Chairman Mao, crossed the Chihshui River four times, and also the Wuchiang River in the south. It launched feint attacks on Kweiyang, directly threatening Kunming, and after three months of fighting on the move, eluding and diverting the enemy, finally manoeuvred across the Golden Sand River from Yunnan. After this crossing we managed to shake off the enemy and frustrated all his encirclements, pursuits, obstructions and interceptions, and so achieved decisive victory in the strategic shift. Later we forced the Tatu River, and passed over the snow-capped mountains and trackless grasslands. Finally, after overcoming Chang Kuo-tao's flightist policy and his plot to split the Party, we triumphantly completed the Long March.

The history of the Long March and the whole Chinese revolution testifies to the great truth that only by acting in accordance with Chairman Mao's revolutionary line can the revolution develop and succeed. If we depart from or go against Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, then the revolution will suffer setbacks and defeat. It is just as Chairman Mao taught us: **"The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything."** This is a scientific conclusion based on the experiences of the Chinese and world revolutionary struggles, and based also on a deep historical experience achieved at the cost of the lives and the blood of countless revolutionary martyrs.

A Gold Ring

Early in January 1935, after crossing the treacherous Wuchiang River, the Central Red Army, tens of thousands in force, continued its march towards Tsunyi.

It was already dark on the third day when the headquarters of the Military Council crossed the Wuchiang River and reached camp at Tsunyi. We were led by Adjutant Officer Liu through a gate into a small courtyard. It was quite a big house, and when we entered the living-room we saw an elegant clock hung on the wall which was reserved for worship of the ancestors. We soon discovered that this clock sounded every quarter of an hour. . . . Liu showed us upstairs to the room assigned to Vice-Chairman Chou. We could tell from the costly furniture that the house belonged to a warlord. From the litter in the room we could also imagine the frenzied rush in which this warlord left.

This was the first time since we set out on the Long March that we lived in such a place. After settling in, we discovered large quantities of opium, silver money and ham inside the warlord's cook-stove and the bamboo grove in his back yard. Before laying out our bedding we made a thorough inspection of the room and cleaned up the paper and rubbish on the floor. While I was cleaning, I came across a shiny yellow object. For someone like me, a cowherd before joining the Red Army, this was an entirely new object. I liked it, and so I put it on my finger.

After seeing the Vice-Chairman to his room I went back to our quarters and brought up the subject of my discovery. Only then did I learn that it was a ring. One person said it was bronze, while another said it was gold. This led to a long argument about what the ring was made of. In the end Comrade Fan Chin-piao decided the only way to see if it was gold was to put it into the fire to see if it tarnished. We put it in the charcoal fire and after leaving it there for a while took it out and polished it — it was still a shining yellow, proving that the ring was gold. After a bit more discussion we all went to bed feeling satisfied about the matter.

The next morning I took some water to the Vice-Chairman's room so he could wash his face. As I was leaving, he turned to me and asked reproachfully, "Wei Kuo-lu, do you understand 'The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention'?"

I didn't see what the Vice-Chairman was getting at and casually replied, "Yes, I do. How could I be in the Red Army for so long and still not understand the meaning of 'The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention'?"

"That's good, but how are you at applying them?"

Still not understanding what he meant, I became nervous and replied hesitatingly, "I, I keep to them all right!"

Pointing at the ring on my finger he declared, "All right? Then where did that thing on your finger come from?" His tone grew serious. "Do you understand what we mean when we say that everything taken after attacking local tyrants is to be handed in?"

Only then did I realize that the Vice-Chairman was talking about the ring that I had picked up, and I explained: "Last night when we were cleaning out this room I found

the ring on the floor. I thought it was a nice trinket and so I put it on my finger."

When he learned how I had come by it, his tone softened. "Comrade, this house belonged to Po Hui-chang, a division commander in Wang Chia-lieh's army. Although he has fled, all his ill-gotten gains in this house have been squeezed out of the labour and sweat of the common people, and rightfully belong to the poor and oppressed!"

The Vice-Chairman's words brought home to me that I had violated Red Army discipline. So when I left his room I went to see our political instructor to hand in the gold ring that I had found.

A Wounded Soldier

Towards the end of February 1935, we set out from Tsunyi for Yunnan, where, upon defeating some enemy troops, we swiftly turned east and went after the army of Wang Chia-lieh, the Kweichow warlord, which had been following us. The weather was bad, and the constant rain which turned the ground into mud slowed us up considerably. Every step we took was an effort and even hazardous, for in the dark we kept slipping over. Vice-Chairman Chou did not go by horse nor after leaving Tsunyi did we ever see him use the stretcher issued to him by the Central Committee, but wearing his old rain-hat he would march with us in the rain and mud. Seeing him in his sodden clothes, we guards always felt uneasy and reproached ourselves for not thinking to bring along an umbrella.

One day just before dawn the rain had all but stopped as we approached Sungkan. Suddenly we heard groaning from a clump of trees by the road. Vice-Chairman Chou stopped immediately and went over to see what was the matter. We found a wounded Red Army soldier lying shivering under a tree. He was very young, only about twenty. From his muddy clothes, wan face and pained expression we knew that he was seriously wounded. Vice-Chairman Chou knelt down beside him and put his hand on the lad's forehead. He then handed him with great care our last cup of drinking water. This seemed to revive the wounded soldier, and he sat up. He told us that he

was a soldier in the Third Detachment of the Third Army Corps. His name was Kuo, and he had been wounded in a skirmish with the enemy the previous night. His wounded right knee was in bad shape.

Gently touching his wounded knee, the Vice-Chairman asked him if it hurt, to which the soldier replied, "No, it doesn't."

"Then, can you walk?"

After taking a look at the wound the soldier firmly replied, "Yes, I can."

So saying he moved his leg and tried to stand up. But though he tried with all his might, he could not move his leg. Vice-Chairman Chou stopped him and said, "Why did you say you could walk, with a wound as nasty as this?" And helping him up, the Vice-Chairman called for a stretcher for the wounded man and helped the soldier onto it, covering him with a blanket. Vice-Chairman Chou's movements were light and gentle, and he was obviously making sure his hand was steady so as not to cause the soldier any pain.

The Vice-Chairman's tenderness with this man was in contrast to his usual direct and decisive manner. We were moved by his expression of class feeling, and tears welled up in our eyes, while the wounded man was so affected by the Vice-Chairman's care and tenderness in helping him onto the stretcher that he could not say a word. It was only when the stretcher was lifted up that he wiped the tears from his eyes and said sincerely to the Vice-Chairman, "When my wound is better I will do all I can to fight the enemy and show my appreciation of your care for me."

His voice was so strong and unequivocal that it was hard to believe it was the same gravely wounded man who had been lying under a tree a few minutes ago groaning. The Vice-Chairman's concern had given him this strength.

Expanding the Army in Chahsi

In February 1935 the Red Army reached Chahsi, a region bordering Yunnan, Kweichow and Szechuan provinces. It was an area where the common people were cruelly exploited by the local landlords and tyrants, as well as being mercilessly repressed by the warlords and bureaucrats. The people were treated like animals and were all in extreme poverty. Beggars on the roadside were a common sight. One day we met an old woman on the road, pallid with hunger and barely covered by the tatters that were her clothes. She was a beggar, and Vice-Chairman Chou had me take out a piece of clothing from his pack and give it to the pitiable woman. She was so delighted that she said, "Thank you, Red Army!"

As revolutionary soldiers in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army we deeply sympathized with the plight of the suffering people. Every time we billeted, the Vice-Chairman told us that apart from attacking the local despots and dividing their property among the poor masses, we had to carry out Chairman Mao's instructions on the nature of the Red Army. That is, to be an armed group performing a revolutionary political task, and that we were not only a fighting force but also a work force. As a revolutionary army we had three heavy responsibilities: to be able to fight, to work among the masses, and to organize production. So,

we would leave a few people to look after the billets and the rest of us would go out and do propaganda work among the people.

The aim of our propaganda work was to explain two principles: that the crass exploitation and oppression of the people by the landlords and local tyrants was the sole cause of their poverty; the second was that the poor had to arm themselves, join the Red Army and overthrow their oppressors if they were to attain complete liberation. We said that was what we ourselves had done, and the whole Red Army was made up of the poor and oppressed. Our extensive propaganda work, and the very example of our army being a well-disciplined force whose officers and men were equals and who were ever thoughtful of the sufferings of the poor — in short, a real workers' and peasants' army — persuaded many young adults to apply for enlistment. The lively scene of volunteers applying to join the army was the same as we had experienced in the central base area in Kiangsi.

There was an incident that was indicative of the enthusiasm with which the peasants volunteered to join up. At a meeting for attacking a local tyrant and distributing his property, a cadre in our army said to the poor people who had received a share of the divided property:

"We are the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. We defend the poor. We welcome all high-aspiring men and women to enlist."

He had no sooner finished speaking than some tens of people volunteered to join up. They sent their share of the distributed grain and clothes to their homes and happily marched with us.

At Chahsi each army unit undertook recruitment, substantially strengthening our Red forces. Later, a song was written about those days:

In February the Red Army arrived at Chahsi,
By the great Chairman Mao it was led.
The masses joined up with excitement and glee,
Three thousand more soldiers enlisted.

The Spilt Meal

While we were still in Kweichow we had a very hectic time, fighting the enemy constantly. Every time we marched, enemy planes would roar overhead, dropping bombs, reconnoitring and strafing wildly. This hampered our operations a lot. Finally our forces took to marching at night.

I remember once when we went against our usual practice and marched in broad daylight. Our aim was to get to Tucheng, about forty kilometres away. We were still some ten kilometres from our camp at about three in the afternoon, and the headquarters staff trudged on in twos and threes, utterly exhausted. Suddenly we heard the distinct sound of clappers up front, and someone was speaking to their cadence:

Come on comrades, keep up the pace,
Ten kilometres more and we'll get to home base.
Today forty kilometres we've gone,
With Chairman Mao himself leading us on.

Red Army soldiers have high morale,
No difficulty on earth can shake us.
To get to the north and fight the Japanese,
We trample on every danger and hardship with ease.

The Tsunyi meeting will always shine,
Placing Chairman Mao at the helm.
Fearless and firm we'll destroy our foes,
And press on forward with Chairman Mao.

Comrades of the propaganda team had taken a position by the road and were giving a performance to keep everyone's spirits up. I really admired these men and women who not only marched along with the rest of us but were always giving performances for us. They were really tough, and as though made of iron never seemed to tire. Every time some difficulty arose they would be up front, helping and encouraging us by their exemplary actions and lively items. Instinctively my pace quickened as I thought of them.

It was just then that an enemy force came unexpectedly charging down on us from the hills. In the face of this sudden threat, Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Chou and Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh took personal command of the fighting. We fought a bloody battle and finally routed the enemy. After this battle, which became known as the battle of Tucheng, we continued our march the same night.

It was extremely dark and we could see nothing in front of us. So every man tied a white towel to his pack so that the man behind could follow along.

We marched the whole night, and though no one had eaten, we still kept up a quick pace. The only sound to be heard was that of marching, which broke through the stillness of the dark night.

It was my turn to march with the comrade carrying the Vice-Chairman's things so as to keep an eye on his documents. The Vice-Chairman and Fan Chin-piao were up ahead some distance from us. I had a three-level food-container with a meal in it for the Vice-Chairman that I had been carrying since we had set out that morning. Because of the fighting, he had not had time to eat it during the day, and as we had been marching since nightfall he had still not eaten. I was sure the Vice-Chairman would be hungry, so

I planned to catch him up and give him the food-container so he could eat the next time we took a rest. I had not gone far when I accidentally tripped on a stone and the food-container flew out of my hand. The three sections scattered in different directions and it took me some time to find them all. All the food was spilt on the ground, and I had cut my mouth, hands and leg in the fall. But I was so upset about the spilt meal that I took no notice of my cuts and bruises. The Vice-Chairman was weary with work and had not eaten all day, and now that I had spilt all of his food, I was worried. What could I possibly give him to eat? I felt around in my bag. I still had a bit of burnt rice — rice that adhered to the bottom of the pot when it was cooked. So I rushed up front to find the Vice-Chairman.

By the time we had a rest it was already past one o'clock in the morning and I had just made it to where the Vice-Chairman was. When Fan Chin-piao caught sight of me he said, "Hurry up and take out the food we've got for the Vice-Chairman!"

When I told him in a very repentant voice that I had spilt the food he was very upset. Then just as we were discussing what we were going to do, the Vice-Chairman came over. Fan Chin-piao told him that I had fallen down and spilt all the food. I went up to the Vice-Chairman like a little child going to its parents for punishment and said quite downcast, "I stumbled and spilt all the food."

"Was it a bad fall? Can you walk all right?" Vice-Chairman Chou bent over and looked at my grazed leg. "It doesn't matter that you spilt a bit of food, but just look at the state you're in!" He then told Fan Chin-piao to call the medical orderly to attend to my cuts and bruises.

Although the Vice-Chairman did not criticize me, he still had to have something to eat. So, after my cuts had been treated, I said tentatively, "I've still got a bit of burnt rice. Do you want some?"

"Burnt rice?" he replied. "All right, I'll have a bit."

Near Chuching

During April of 1935, after doing some rapid marching, the Central Red Army threw off the Szechuan and Kweichow warlords' troops as well as those of Hsueh Yueh. After fighting our way across the Wuchiang River, we closed in on Kweiyang. Though we were all happy in the hope of entering the city, we never did. And our hopes vanished when Vice-Chairman Chou told us one day that every man was to make a few more pairs of straw sandals, prepare more dry rations and get ready to continue the march. After making some simple preparations we turned away from Kweiyang and set out in a southwesterly direction.

After leaving Kweiyang we travelled nearly round-the-clock, averaging ninety kilometres in a day and night. Apart from leaving a little time for eating, we were virtually constantly on the move. Our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army under the wise and correct leadership of Chairman Mao was an invincible force. Yet, after this long unbroken period of rapid marching our troops were exhausted, and as soon as the front ranks stopped, even for a moment, there would be some men in the rear who would fall asleep. We stayed our hunger by eating some of the dry rations we were carrying, and drank from mountain streams. Although it was hard going, no one complained, the reason being that everyone knew from experience that this long non-stop marching was part of Chairman Mao's strategy. After some ten days of marching we entered the frontier region of Yun-

nan Province. We later learned that it was precisely the flexible tactic of making a feint to the east but attacking in the west which Chairman Mao applied when he led us in crossing and re-crossing the Chihshui River four times and in marching long distances. This had totally disrupted the enemy plans and kept him constantly on the run, tiring him out and causing his defeat. Our forces were thus enabled to continue the march westwards and were given the time to.

Yunnan was completely different from Kweichow where "no three days are clear, no three li are flat." Though the land slanted up to the plateaus of southwest China, there were still many level areas and the weather was good, especially around Kunming. The saying that all four seasons are like spring is quite true of Kunming.

We arrived in the area of Chuching where though there were some enemy forces they had already been surrounded by our spearhead troops. We were marching by day and had just ascended to a point overlooking one of the large plains so common in Yunnan. Through the plain was a large road leading to Chuching in the east from Kunming in the west. Just as we began marching in long lines along the road we heard the sound of engines coming from the direction of Kunming. This was soon followed by the appearance of three enemy planes. No one sounded the air-raid signal and we did not take cover. For some reason the planes did not dive and strafe us but passed overhead as if they had not seen anything.

Mystified, I asked Staff-Officer Kung what was going on.

He replied, "It's very simple. Only ten days ago we were still some thousands of li away in Kweichow, now we're here on the outskirts of Kunming. The enemy would never dream that we could move so fast."

It suddenly struck me that the enemy planes had mistaken our brave Red Army troops for their own men!

After the planes had passed over, we noticed dust above the road in the direction of Kunming. On closer inspection we could see three trucks heading towards us. They were soon so near that we could see the Kuomintang symbol of a white sun on a blue sky clearly painted on their hoods. Our troops quickly dispersed and prepared to fight. We guards stood beside the Vice-Chairman, gun in hand. The enemy vehicles saw that something was amiss and turned around trying to escape. Vice-Chairman Chou kept walking in their direction as he ordered our troops to charge the trucks and cut off their escape. Just as he finished speaking, a volley of shots flattened the tires of the enemy vehicles, making their escape impossible.

The trucks were soon surrounded and the occupants ordered to get out. An officer calmly got out and demanded, "Which unit are you men from? We're on urgent business, so stop this fooling around!"

"Who's fooling? You're our prisoners!" came the contemptuous reply, and our men took his and his troops' guns. As soon as the enemy officer heard he was a prisoner, and saw the men before him in grey uniforms and eight-sided caps with the five-pointed star on them, he realized what had happened and stood there stunned. After a moment he started shaking with fear and collapsed on the ground. I thought it was very funny to see a Kuomintang officer, who usually lorded it over everyone, so taken by surprise.

Vice-Chairman Chou questioned the prisoners briefly, and from what they said learned that they were on their way to Chuching, that the captured officer was one of Hsueh Yueh's men. The truck was loaded with ham, medicine for wounds, tea and other famous Yunnan local products being sent to

Hsueh Yueh by Lung Yun, the local warlord governor. There were also military maps of Yunnan in one of the trucks which we regarded as a special prize.

When we made camp, this booty was sent to headquarters. Laughing, Vice-Chairman Chou said to Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh and the other leaders, "The enemy is the best transportation corps we could ever wish for. They send us whatever we need, and they don't require any payment. . . . We were just worrying about not having maps of Yunnan, and here we are with maps sent to us by the enemy themselves. Our wounded men were in need of medicine and now we've got all the medicine we could want." His putting it this way made everyone present burst into laughter.

Ten Eggs

Vice-Chairman Chou was very strict with us in the observance of the disciplinary code of our army as expressed in "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention."

I remember an incident that occurred in 1935 that is a good illustration of this. Our army was travelling through Malung County in Yunnan at the time and the enemy was both blocking our progress and chasing after us. We were also being constantly followed, machine-gunned and bombed by a dozen enemy planes. Chairman Mao and Vice-Chairman Chou took personal command of the army to fight the enemy fearlessly and ordered that we continue to march day and night so as to throw off the enemy pursuit.

One day, after we had been resting for about ten hours, I was very worried when I realized that the Vice-Chairman had still not eaten breakfast, so I decided I should quickly get him something to eat. I went with another comrade to the nearby village but discovered that there was not a person to be seen. It was obvious that the villagers did not know the Red Army's policy and that enemy propaganda had scared them away. As there was no one around, I did not know where I could buy some food. Still I kept thinking of the Vice-Chairman working all night with nothing to eat, so I had to find something to give him. As I walked around the village, I discussed the problem with the other comrade,

and we decided to think of some way to buy something for the Vice-Chairman.

We carefully looked around the whole village but could find nothing. We would have to go into some villager's house to look for food. After a few tries we found two bowls of cornmeal and ten eggs in a house. We were delighted with our find, but there was no one at home and we did not know to whom we should give the money for the food. In the end we decided to go back and make something for the Vice-Chairman to eat first and think of how to pay for it later.

We got back to where everyone was resting and fixed a meal for the Vice-Chairman. When we took it to him he looked at it once and then asked us where we had got the ingredients. We said that we had bought them, and he asked us how much we had paid for them. Seeing our hesitation in answering, he said, "Oh, so you didn't pay, did you?"

We were stumped, and could only tell the truth: "There was no one in the village at all, and we decided it wasn't safe to leave the money lying around. So we thought we'd first get you something to eat and then decide what to do about payment."

Vice-Chairman Chou said gravely, "That's not good enough. Take these things back where you got them immediately. It's against revolutionary discipline to take any of the people's things like this. You'll have to make a thorough self-criticism." He went on in explanation: "We are the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army under the leadership of Chairman Mao, we're a people's army and every man must act strictly in accordance with 'The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention.' None of us can take anything that belongs to the people, not even a needle or piece of thread. We have to remember this at

all times and in all circumstances. We should prove to the people by our actions that the enemy's propaganda about us is false."

The Vice-Chairman's criticism made me feel very ashamed, and I thought we should take the food back and correct our error. Comrade Fan Chin-piao, however, stopped me. He went over to the Vice-Chairman and said in a pleading voice, "Would it be all right if we wrote a note to the villager explaining what happened, and left some money in the egg basket?"

The Vice-Chairman thought for a moment, then reluctantly agreed. I immediately wrote a note, the gist of which was: Dear villagers, our Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was resting outside your village, and because one of our comrades had not eaten breakfast, we went into your village to buy some food. Although we looked everywhere, we could not find anybody, and in the end we entered your house and took two bowls of cornmeal and ten eggs. In doing so we broke "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention" of our army. We should ask for your pardon. We leave you this note and one yuan in silver to cover the cost of the cornmeal and the eggs, and hope you will accept it.

The Vice-Chairman read it and said, "All right, take it there immediately." He also told us to take the remaining cornmeal and eggs to the other leaders as well.

For the rest of my life I will treasure the memories of the top leaders of the Communist Party keeping to the strict discipline of the Party and the Red Army, protecting the interests of the people by their exemplary conduct during those difficult times. They educated us to continue and develop the glorious tradition of our Party and army forever.

Crossing the Luting Bridge

In early May 1935 we crossed the Golden Sand (Chinsha) River and headed towards west Szechuan through a Yi-minority-nationality region. After some twenty days of rapid marching we encountered another obstacle — the Tatu River.

One day, on our march we heard someone report to Vice-Chairman Chou that a spearhead force from our army had already occupied Anshunchang and had captured a battalion commander guarding the river crossing along with two boats. The Vice-Chairman was highly pleased as we settled down at Anshunchang to eat dinner. Nestled in the hills close to the river, and with its main street asphalted and neat rows of trees growing along it, this small township really looked very beautiful.

Vice-Chairman Chou did not rest upon arrival at Anshunchang, but immediately got together with Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh, General Chief of Staff Liu Po-cheng, Chief of Staff Tso Chuan, Comrade Chang Yun-yi and other leaders to discuss the question of crossing the river.

Though we had put to rout the enemy guarding the west bank of the river and had control of it, it would take a long time for all of us soldiers and the horses to cross over with only two boats. The current was swift, and we could not span the river with a bridge. Added to this was the danger of the pursuing enemy overtaking us. This would put us at a great disadvantage, with our back to the river, to engage the enemy. So General Chief of Staff Liu Po-cheng and Political Commissar of the 1st Army Group Nieh Jung-chen should lead a division over the river while the other troops should continue along the west bank to the upper reaches of the river as quickly as possible, to make a crossing at the Luting bridge. After they had crossed the river, Comrades Liu Po-cheng and Nieh Jung-chen would fight along its east bank northwards, take the Luting bridge and link up with us. That afternoon we began the march on the Luting bridge.

It was already pitch dark. Rain was pouring down and the road was slippery. Our clothes were wet through with perspiration and rain, and every gust of cold wind sent a shiver through our bodies as we followed Vice-Chairman Chou over the uneven road. Whenever the way was slightly broader, Vice-Chairman Chou would call Comrade Li Fu-chun, Director of the Political Department, to his side to talk as they walked. The Kuomintang claimed that the Red Army would be annihilated on the bank of the Tatu River, and that we would be destroyed like the general Shih Ta-kai of the Taiping Revolution.* I remember the Vice-Chairman discussing this period of history, and how we were now thwarting the Kuomintang plans. He knew a great deal about history and we were so fascinated listening to him that we forgot how tired we were. We all deeply admired the depth of our leader's knowledge.

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* The Taiping Revolution (1851-64) was a revolutionary peasant war of the mid-19th century which opposed the Ching Dynasty's feudal rule and national oppression. In January 1851, Hung Hsiu-chuan, Yang Hsiu-ching and other leaders of this revolution, rebelled in Chintien Village, Kueiping County, Kwangsi Province, and declared the founding of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Shih Ta-kai (1831-63) was one of the leading commanders of the Taiping Revolution who, due to a split in the leadership of the rebellion, broke away from the Heavenly Kingdom with over 100,000 troops to fight independently. In May 1863, he and his forces met defeat on the banks of the Tatu River.

The second half of the night was just as dark, and the road no easier to travel. On the left were bitterly cold and precipitous mountains reaching into the clouds whose peaks were snow-capped all year round; to the right was the deep, swift-flowing Tatu River posing a threat to all who walked along its narrow banks. None of us thought of the personal danger involved, however, for we were united by one thought, and that was to get to the Luting bridge as speedily as possible.

On the afternoon of the third day after our advance regiment led by Comrade Yang Cheng-wu had taken the Luting bridge, we arrived there. It was the first time I had ever seen such a bridge, nor had I ever heard anyone describe such a structure. It was made neither of stone nor of wood, but was completely made of iron chains. There were thirteen chains the links of which were made of iron, and each link was as thick as the rim of a rice-bowl. The bridge stretched from the east bank of the river to its west bank. On each side were two chains as railings, the remaining nine chains were underneath and had been laid with wooden planks to make up the bridge. The wooden planks had been removed by the enemy, however, leaving the naked dark chains strung across the river with no covering. There was a stone at the head of the bridge with the two lines inscribed on it: "Numerous mountains rise beside the Luting bridge, piercing the endless floating clouds."

The Vice-Chairman had us call our officer in charge of directing the crossing of the river to report on the situation. Comrade Yang Cheng-wu reported to the Vice-Chairman that the enemy had destroyed the planks on the bridge and that the replacement planks were not very strong. The troops had to cross at a crawl, and the horses were too scared

to cross at all. In fact, one horse had just fallen into the river.

On hearing that a horse had fallen in, Vice-Chairman Chou asked urgently, "Have any people been lost?" He was only put at ease when the reply was in the negative.

He re-emphasized that all troops crossing over were to keep in order, follow instructions and ensure a safe crossing. If the animals balked, they would have to be got over last so as not to hold up the men. We then began to cross the bridge ourselves with Vice-Chairman Chou and the other leaders. "When you cross the bridge you have to be careful, keep your eyes on the opposite bank and don't look down," said Vice-Chairman Chou.

I accidentally did look down and had to stop with fright when I saw the swirling water and the breaking waves below. It was too terrible to think what would happen if one lost his footing and delivered himself into this watery tempest. The longer I gazed at the turbulent flow below, the more uneasy I became and the less steady my footing. I took courage, however, from Vice-Chairman Chou who was completely at ease and calm as he proceeded in sure steps before me. I thought to myself, if a leader can be so fearless then there is nothing for us to be afraid of. Steadying myself, I went forward in the footsteps of the Vice-Chairman.

Mid-way of the bridge, Comrade Fan Chin-piao, who was crossing up ahead, stopped and told Vice-Chairman Chou that one of the planks was split.

The Vice-Chairman replied that we must repair the damage before proceeding, and with that he put another plank into position himself and continued ahead. Replacing planks as we went, we finally reached the other end of the bridge.

The General Chief of Staff Liu Po-cheng and Political Commissar Nieh Jung-chen met us at the head of the bridge and shook the Vice-Chairman's hand. We then set out for Luting together.

General Chief of Staff Liu told Vice-Chairman Chou: "When we attacked Luting Town, the enemy set fires as they fled and burnt down many houses. Our troops not sent in pursuit of the enemy remained in the town to help fight the fires."

The Vice-Chairman was indignant on hearing that the enemy had burnt down the people's houses and went immediately with other leaders to inspect the damage. Then, for some reason, we returned to the bridge.

After a while our great leader Chairman Mao appeared on the bridge, smiling, and in steady steps crossed over to be met by Vice-Chairman Chou and the other leaders, with whom he warmly shook hands.

Only then did I realize that Vice-Chairman Chou had returned to the bridge so as to meet Chairman Mao. He had replaced broken and dangerous planks on the bridge himself to ensure the Chairman's safe crossing.

After entering the city to rest we bought rice, potatoes and pumpkin and prepared a meal. While we were eating, a messenger came to report that the fleeing enemy had been overtaken and disarmed by our men. This gave the leaders more to talk about as they ate. Everyone agreed that the Kuomintang had been defeated again and that the Red Army had overcome yet another obstacle on the Long March. Under the wise leadership of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army would never suffer the same fate as Shih Ta-kai, and all of Chiang Kai-shek's ideas to the contrary were mere illusions. . . .

After eating we started off on the march again, our comrades singing jubilantly in praise of the glorious victory at Luting:

The folk ballads all praise the Red Army,
For Red Army soldiers are really brave.
One man equals ten, and ten one hundred,
All vying with each other valiantly to fight the enemy.

When the Red Army came to the Luting bridge,
They bravely crossed over the dark chains,
We scared the enemy so they ran for cover,
And now our red flag waves victoriously in the breeze.

The heroic Red Army marched on to new and continued victories under the direction of Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line!

Camping in the High Mountains

After crossing the Tatu River we marched in the direction of Tienchuan in Szechuan Province. The villainous Kuomintang reactionaries put heavy forces along the way to cut off our march, so we had no choice but to take detours along small byways if we were to avoid major battles involving heavy losses, and preserve our forces.

These "byways" were usually not roads at all. We simply had to cut our way through the deep mountains and dense forests. Because of our numbers we soon trod out paths in these virgin forests. The ancient trees were so tall and thick that little sunlight ever reached the damp ground. All around was eerie, and the rotting leaves on the earth smelled of mould. Sometimes we would catch sight of a mountain goat, wild ox or boar frightened by our approach or roaming about freely. The weather was an ever-present adversary, for if there was not a constant downpour then there would be a fine mist of rain falling all the time, with the result that it was never dry underfoot. Sometimes after a storm, a mountain torrent would rush down carrying mud and grass with it so deep that we would have to crawl our way through it. As soon as night fell, everything went pitch dark and if anyone lagged behind he would have no way of finding out where the people ahead were. Vice-Chairman Chou looked out for and encouraged us throughout this period. In case we might fall behind, he took us by the hand and was always telling us revolutionary stories. He

marched along together with us, but whenever we stopped he would do some other work. We never ceased marvelling at his tremendous energy. But even an iron man must rest, and his hard life and strenuous work caused him to grow thinner and thinner. Especially after getting into that infernal forest and the constant rain, the Vice-Chairman's clothes, like ours, were always soaked by rain water and perspiration. They clung to his body with no chance to dry.

One of the most prominent aspects of the Vice-Chairman's character was that the more serious a situation was, the calmer he would be. The harder his life, the more optimistic he would become. In those difficult days Vice-Chairman Chou's example of following Chairman Mao closely and carrying out the revolution gave us great encouragement and inspiration.

One day, after setting out from Shuitzutien we were passing over a high mountain when a storm broke. The wild grass, old leaves and mud on the mountain made the road very difficult to walk on and slowed down our progress considerably. If not careful, one could easily step into a mud-hole and require the help of someone else to get out again. We walked the whole day and did not make it down the other side of the mountain. At nightfall the order to set up camp came from up front and we all huddled together on the hillside. Like us, Vice-Chairman Chou had walked through the mud all day long and was tired as well as hungry and thirsty. But the whole hill was a huge mud-patch without as much as a foot of dry ground, let alone firewood or drinking water. All we could give the leader to eat was some soggy dry rations and rain water collected in a cup. After the problem of food was more or less dealt with, we had to consider what to do about sleeping arrange-

ments. We consulted together for some time but no one could think of an adequate solution.

Vice-Chairman Chou overheard us talking and broke in in a cheery voice, "You don't have to worry about me. Find a place for yourselves to sleep."

"But where will you sleep?"

"I can sleep anywhere. I'll get a fine night's rest leaning against this big tree."

I protested, but he replied happily, "What's wrong with it?" Then pointing at the comrades sitting around him in the mud and resting against the trees, he said, "If everyone else can do it, why can't I?"

He again urged us to find ourselves somewhere to rest and he himself settled down for the night by the tree.

Everyone was up and about before sunrise the next day, each person claiming that his arrangements for sleeping were the best. Those who had stood said that standing was tops, while those who had sat in the mud said there was no better way in the circumstances, and so the arguing went on. I don't know who broke in and said jokingly, "It's no good to sit because you get covered in mud, and standing is no good either because you get sore legs. The only way out is to climb up into a tree like a monkey to rest."

Just as everyone was talking and laughing the news that our spearhead force had taken Tienchuan was passed down the line, and that Yang Sen's forces, which had tried to block our advance had been defeated. The excitement created by this news flushed away the exhaustion of the previous day and night completely.

Incidents I Cannot Forget

After our 1st Front Army took the Luting bridge, we continued victoriously in a northwesterly direction, taking Peilungping, Tienchuan and other places on the way. In mid-June we reached Tajaochi, which was part of Paohsing County on the Szechuan border. This was where the snow-covered mountains began. Before us lay the obstacle of Chiachin Mountain, which rose into the clouds in front of us.

Chiachin Mountain is situated to the northwest of Paohsing and south of Maokung, some 5,000 metres above sea level. To cross it one had to travel seventy kilometres. In its mantle of white snow it glistened like silver in the sun, so that looking at it from below one got the impression of a huge pile of silver on the ground. It is towering, like the Lushan range in Kiangsi Province which people never get a complete view of because of its veil of clouds. We had long ago heard tales of this impassable "weird" place, it even being said that birds could not fly over it, while some people called it a "magic mountain." But we were soldiers of the Red Army, immensely loyal to Chairman Mao, and not to be daunted. We were not afraid of any hardships nor could we be stopped by any obstacles.

The June heat was oppressive and the sun seemed to be baking the earth with its relentless rays. We marched forward feeling as if we were in a furnace, but stopped neither to drink nor to so much as wipe off our sweat, so as to outmarch the enemy soldiers pursuing us. Soon we came

to the foot of the snow-covered mountain which lay like a sleeping white tiger before us. The peaks were lost in the floating clouds, which blended so well with the snow that we could not tell what was snow and what was cloud. The frigid mountain stood in striking contrast to the flowering valley where we were. They seemed like two different worlds.

We were in our thin army uniforms, and in this minority-nationality region where population was sparse and the people poor, we could not buy anything to warm us up, such as wine or hot peppers. The best we could do was for each man to find a walking stick and prepare to overcome the bitter cold of the mountain with the heat of our revolutionary enthusiasm, while with our walking sticks we would push aside all dangers and difficulties in our way.

As I was from the southern province of Kiangsi, I had rarely seen snow, and certainly had never crossed a snow-covered mountain. Everything seemed so new that I was absorbed in looking around and taking it all in. Little did I know that as we made our way up the steep mountain our difficulties would increase, that the wind laced with snow would thrust the bitter cold through our clothes like needles.

The snow on the mountain was so deep in places that if one was not careful one could slip into a crevice and disappear from sight.

Vice-Chairman Chou shouted loudly, "Comrades! Let's go! See who reaches the top first!"

A chorus went up: "Comrades, put on the speed and let's get up the mountain!"

Vice-Chairman Chou got me to sing a folk song to spur everyone over the mountain, and I happily sang:

Ay ya li! The mists cover the mountains,
Mountains on mountains.
The Red Army crosses the snowy hills,
Not fearing any difficulties.
Oh, comrades,
Fight on to the north to stop the Japanese!

Just as I finished, some comrades called out for another song, so with their encouragement another comrade and I sang,

The weather is hot in June,
We battle wind and snow on Mt. Chiachin.
In defiance of heaven and earth,
We will never stop singing our mountain songs.
Our mighty forces cross the snowy peaks,
A million difficulties we tread underfoot,
The Red Army fighters are invincible,
Chiang Kai-shek can only fume and cry.

Our singing echoed through the valleys and the cheers of our comrades resounded in the skies. Hunger and weariness forgotten, we ascended the mountain with renewed energy. I looked up and saw that our spearhead had already reached halfway, while the rear guard had not even begun the ascent.

Our climb up the snowy mountain was the hardest part of the whole Long March. Looking into the distance, all we could see to the left was thick, solid blocks of frozen snow. To the right were steep walls of ice with a white path between them of solid and slippery snow. The ground underfoot was frozen hard, and our walking sticks made a sharp sound at each step. Above were whirling mountain winds which blew the snow up all around us, concealed the sun and sky and penetrated our clothes with every gust. One false step could result in a man sliding into a crevice

and perhaps to his death. The men up front dug out foot-holes for those who followed, while these joined hands and slowly ascended the mountain in the footsteps of the men in front. Occasionally shouts of "Be careful!" would be heard, and quite a few comrades had to use ropes to rescue men who had fallen into crevices. Upon getting out, these men would brush the snow from their clothes and push on.

The snowy mountain was really "weird." The mountain clouds and mists were constantly changing, sometimes thick and dark, then suddenly melting away into a light covering. It gave one the impression of flying in the clouds, with snow swept in all directions by the wind. The icy wind that assailed us was like a knife, and we shivered in the cold. "White beards" formed around our mouths, and breathing became more difficult as we gained altitude. We became dizzy, and our legs lost their strength. Every few steps we would have to stop for a breather; our progress became harder and slower. At mid-day dark clouds appeared in the east accompanied by a furious wind. The clouds grew bigger as they approached, covering the surrounding mountain tops in a formless haze. The wind blew fiercer, carrying with it the collected snow and darkening everything around us. In a moment heavy snow began to fall and we thought we would all be buried in it. The gale and thick-falling snow obstructed our vision as well as blocked out all other sound. Those behind fixed their gaze on the men in front of them, watching where they walked, so we continued to edge our way forward in the teeth of the strong wind and heavy snow.

As they climbed hard, Vice-Chairman Chou, Comrade Tung Pi-wu and the other leaders exhorted us: "Come on comrades! To cross over this snowy mountain fastness means victory!"

The leaders' revolutionary optimism and faith in the inevitable victory of the revolution was a tremendous source of inspiration for every one of us. With a common aim and common belief we joined hands and marched on through the pounding gale and snow, fighting on to the mountain peak. If anyone had sat down to rest they would surely not have got up again. I still remember a comrade from my home-town, Chiang Liang-lan, who collapsed, and when I went to help him his body was already stone cold and he had stopped breathing. Tearful, we dug out a snow-filled crevice and, covering our dead comrade's face with our own clothes, put him into the hole and filled it in with snow. We mourned in silence, and Vice-Chairman Chou said full of grief, "Rest, Comrade Chiang! We shall carry on the work that you have not been able to see to the end. One day the red flag will fly over the very mountain you are buried in."

Just as we were about to reach the peak, it suddenly began to hail. Hail-stones as big as walnuts pelted us, leaving us all with bruises and swellings. As the storm grew more intense the air became thinner, and we all gasped for breath, feeling as though our hearts were welling up in our throats. My head swam and I saw stars. I was barely able to see the men in front of me, and my legs felt soft and were shaking. Some comrades could not go on and died of exhaustion. Others fell but struggled to their feet. I gave a *chingko* barley cake I had to one comrade who fell, but he only took one bite and then handed it to another comrade. In this way my little cake went to several people with some still left over — an expression of the deep class feeling among revolutionary soldiers!

By two in the afternoon we were nearly at the mountain peak. The blizzard had passed over, leaving the mountain

white and shining in the sun. Its rays striking the snow were blinding. I could scarcely open my eyes, and some comrades virtually lost their sight altogether. The heat of its rays began to melt the snow, which looked like so many dragons wriggling all over the place. Large masses of loosened snow and ice rolled down the mountainside, endangering anyone in their way. We had exhausted ourselves completely climbing the mountain, and not having eaten anything substantial for several days, plus the lack of oxygen near the peak, we were all left panting and weak. No officer or soldier complained, however, and we were deeply moved and heartened by the example of Vice-Chairman Chou marching on before us with his steady step. Vice-Chairman Chou worked all day long, and though he was not physically robust, at the most difficult times he would be at the very front guiding and encouraging everyone by his exemplary actions to press on fearlessly to the victory Chairman Mao had pointed out. We tightened our belts again and again, vowing that as long as there was breath left in us we would follow the Party and Chairman Mao to the front line to fight the Japanese invaders!

By three that afternoon we had made it to the peak of the mountain and began our descent. I had thought it would be much easier going down than it had been climbing up the mountain. I had certainly not expected that it would be just as difficult, with the added danger of slipping and sliding down, perhaps even to death. One comrade up front was careless and took a wrong step which sent him sliding dozens of yards down the mountain, which scared us so that we came out in a cold sweat. Just as we were worrying about what had happened to him, he called up to us, "Come on! Slide down!" and we all boldly did so. . . . Standing up again, we found our clothes in shreds, our arms and backsides cut and bleeding after the slide, so that the wind bit into the open wounds.

The black clouds gradually dispersed and the evening sun shone on the conquered snow mountain. How calm it appeared now, behind the heroic soldiers of the Red Army! Delighted, we said to Vice-Chairman Chou, "We have finally won the victory of crossing over the mountain!"

"Yes," he replied, "and it has left us with indelible memories."

Vice-Chairman Chou Falls Ill

At the end of July 1935, under the correct leadership of the Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao, the First Front Army of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army had broken through four heavily manned enemy defence lines. We had successfully crossed the natural barriers of the Golden Sand, Tatu and Wuchiang rivers which had been blockaded by numerous enemy troops, as well as crossing the 5,000-metre-high Chiachin Mountain, to enter the Maoerhkai-Chokechi region of Szechuan.

We first went with Vice-Chairman Chou to Chokechi and later moved on to Maoerhkai. We were very happy when we heard we would have a chance to recuperate there, for we really needed a rest. For the six months that we had been on the Long March, Vice-Chairman Chou had never really rested. In the day he would be marching with us and then he would work late into the night, sometimes not sleeping at all before the next day's march. When we saw that he was extremely tired we would tell him to rest, but he always replied softly, "All right, when I have finished with this I'll have a rest." But when he was finished with one thing there would always be something else to do. After we settled in at Maoerhkai, we heated some water so that he could wash his face and feet. He said, "Wait a while, I'll wash in a minute." We waited for some time but he still sat absorbed in his work, with no thought of washing. I knew I should not disturb him while he was

concentrating, but I was forced out of a sense of duty to remind him, "If you don't wash soon the water will be cold." He looked at me, and knowing he had no choice, put aside what he was doing and went to wash. Mealtimes were the same. We would always have to reheat his food and only when we cornered him could we get him to stop his work and eat, though he would often read documents while he was eating. It was also frightening to see how little sleep he got. Sometimes he would not sleep for several nights in a row but put his head on his desk and take a nap when he was exhausted and then continue working when he woke.

Once it was already past two o'clock in the morning. I reminded the Vice-Chairman what time it was and said he should rest. He replied, "I'll rest in a minute, you go to sleep first." However, when I woke up later in the morning I found him still sitting there reading documents. His straw pallet on the ground had not been slept in. I said in a disappointed tone, "You didn't sleep again!" He replied with a laugh, "No, there's nothing I can do about it. Could you get me some water so I can wash my face?"

Due to the months of a constant lack of rest and ceaseless marching, fighting and work, the Vice-Chairman became thinner and his already by no means short beard grew even longer, though his wise, bright eyes remained unchanged.

At Maoerhkai we guards got together and decided we should give the Vice-Chairman some nourishing food to build up his strength again. But though we did everything we could and went everywhere possible in search of something good for him, we ended up with nothing. "What a strange place! Apart from *chingko* barley there's nothing to be had," someone complained. In the morning the Vice-Chairman had pea-sprouts and barley, and the same again

in the afternoon, and then again the next day. It was the same, in fact, every day.

While we were recuperating in Maoerhkai, Vice-Chairman Chou's work-load became even heavier. There were meetings every day, and besides studying matters concerning the crossing of the grasslands a great deal of time was spent in fighting against the anti-Party actions of Chang Kuo-tao* who tried to split the Central Committee. Chang opposed the Red Army going to the north and instead wanted to divert the army to the minority-nationality regions of Szechuan and Sikang, which was tantamount to giving up the struggle altogether. Moreover, Chang Kuo-tao openly acted against the Party and the Central Committee, setting up his personal bogus central committee and so destroying the unity of the Party and the Red Army. In spite of painstaking efforts made by Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee to educate him, this shameless traitor finally broke away from the Party as we began to cross the grasslands, resulting in serious losses to the Fourth Front Army.

Our great leader Chairman Mao led us on northwards.

* Chang Kuo-tao was a renegade from the Chinese revolution. Speculating on the revolution, he joined the Chinese Communist Party in his youth. In the Party he made many mistakes and ended by committing grave crimes. Most notoriously, in 1935 he opposed the Red Army's northward march, advocating a defeatist and liquidationist withdrawal by the Red Army to the minority-nationality areas on the Szechuan-Sikang border, and he engaged in openly traitorous activities against the Party and the Central Committee, established his own bogus central committee, disrupted the unity of the Party and the Red Army, and caused heavy losses to its Fourth Front Army. Thanks to patient education by Comrade Mao Tsetung and the Central Committee, the Fourth Front Army and its numerous cadres soon came back under the correct leadership of the Central Committee and played an honourable part in subsequent struggles. Chang Kuo-tao, however, proved incorrigible, escaped by himself from the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region in the spring of 1938 and joined the Kuomintang secret police.

One night after a meeting, some seven days before our departure, we were walking back to our quarters when Vice-Chairman Chou asked me, "How are the preparations for crossing the grasslands going?"

I said, "Everything is ready. Every man will carry five kilogrammes of fried *chingko* barley flour. Fan Chin-piao and I have each found a sheep's skin which we'll make into vests. We also got some wool which we used to pad some clothes. We made you a wool-padded top too." I then asked him, "When are we going to set out?"

"Very soon!" he replied. We walked on a few steps, then he turned and said, "The grasslands are vast and uninhabited. The weather is unpredictable, so you should not only be prepared with material things for what lies ahead but you should also be mentally prepared to suffer."

I nodded in acknowledgement.

When we got back to our quarters we found that Fan Chin-piao had already prepared the evening meal of *chingko* barley and pea-sprouts, which he brought out for the Vice-Chairman to eat.

The Vice-Chairman looked at it and said, "I don't feel like eating. Give me a cup of hot water instead."

By the time I came back with the water I found him working over his documents as usual under the dim light of his desk lamp. I put the water down next to him and he told me to rest and that he would go to bed soon himself. After a few minutes I saw that his light was actually out and thought to myself in relief: The Vice-Chairman has gone to bed very early tonight. But before an hour was over I heard him call, "Guard!"

I went in quickly to find that he wanted another cup of water. His voice sounded weak, quite unlike its usual strong

tone. I asked, "Don't you feel well?" And when I felt his forehead I was shocked to find it very hot.

We called a doctor over, who took the Vice-Chairman's temperature. It was 39.5°C. We were all very worried, and his wife, Comrade Teng Ying-chao, was very upset by the Vice-Chairman's illness. She stayed at his side taking care of him.

The next day his temperature went up again and he was delirious the whole day. Chairman Mao, Liu Po-cheng, Yeh Chien-ying and the other leaders came to see him, all very concerned. Chairman Mao asked the comrade from the medical corps, "Can Fu Lien-chang get back here to see him?"

"Doctor Fu has gone south with the 5th and 9th Army Groups under Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh. A telegram from them says he can't make it back because of the distance. But there is a doctor in the 1st Detachment."

The Chairman had the medical corps telegraph the doctor to come to Maoerhkai immediately.

A doctor named Tai soon arrived. It was said that he came from Kian in Kiangsi Province with Comrade Lo Ping-hui, and that he was a very good doctor. We felt relieved and happy to have been able to get such a doctor to treat the Vice-Chairman.

According to the doctor's instructions, we guards took turns getting snow from the mountains in which to soak towels to keep the Vice-Chairman's temperature down. On the third day it dropped, and he began to come round. Chairman Mao came to see him often, telling us each time to take good care of the Vice-Chairman. Because his illness was quite serious, Chairman Mao invariably asked the comrades who had come for instructions to see him. Once after the Chairman had finished instructing Comrade Yang Cheng-wu on the crossing of the grasslands, he told Yang

in particular that he should go and see Vice-Chairman Chou, fully showing Chairman Mao's deep class feelings for Vice-Chairman Chou.

By the fourth day the Vice-Chairman's temperature was normal and he was feeling much better, so that when the Chairman and others came to see him he sat up to talk with them. They were all very pleased at his quick recovery. One of the leaders said amusingly, "Now you have recovered from such an illness in these conditions, you should really thank Marx's spirit in heaven," which made everyone laugh.

When he felt a little better, the Vice-Chairman insisted on sitting up, and he had me take him his documents, books and papers to read. I completely sympathized with him, as study was so much a habit of his; even when he was on horseback he would always have a book with him. For him, it was a punishment to have nothing to do. Because he was still weak we forced him to read less and pay attention to resting. Sometimes he would tell us stories, talk about revolutionary principles or the major events inside and outside China. He instructed us to do what Chairman Mao told us, study Marxism-Leninism and keep to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line so as to carry the revolution on to the end.

Just two days before we were to set out, when Vice-Chairman Chou was nearly well, I unfortunately fell sick myself. When the Vice-Chairman knew of this he came to see me and had the doctor give me injections and medicine, and looked after me in every way. With the care of the Vice-Chairman and the treatment of the doctor, I recovered very quickly. Yet, when we set out, the Vice-Chairman made me ride his horse.

Glimpses of Life on the Grasslands

After crossing the snow-covered mountains our army had stopped in Maoerhkai, and while waiting for the order to leave we prepared to cross the grasslands by collecting dry rations and making straw sandals. The grasslands, like the mountains, were a region of unpredictable weather. Sometimes the sky would be cloudless and the sun so hot that it burnt your face, then in an instant it might become overcast and a wild wind bringing dreadful storm would blow up, taking all into the cold depths of winter. In the grasslands, progress was slow and ever more difficult, for the grass grew waist-high and was very uneven, making marching like walking on sponge. But tested by countless mountains and rivers on our march, we commanders and fighters of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army were not in the least intimidated by the seemingly endless grasslands but swore to overcome the obstacles that lay ahead of us with revolutionary determination.

Vice-Chairman Chou was mostly concerned with his work, and wherever we made camp he would start at once. If he had no seat, he would sit on a clump of grass; without a desk, he would read and sign documents on his knees. In this way our leader carried out and defended Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and worked selflessly for the Chinese and the world revolution. Whenever we rested, we guards would split up and go to look for water and dry wood, then we'd measure out a full bowl of *chingko* barley

for each man and put it in a wash-basin to cook. At night we cut branches for tent-poles and tied ropes to them and used our sheets to rig up a tent, after which we would put some grass inside, making a comfortable temporary "barracks." With the grass as our bed and the sky our quilt, we squeezed in back to back and really slept quite well!

At first we had three meals a day consisting of a bowl of *chingko* barley at each. Later on we got a telegram from the forces up front saying that grain was in short supply. The leadership decided we'd cut our meal down to two bowls of *chingko* barley a day. This small amount of food was by no means sufficient, and often after marching some ten kilometres our stomachs would start to growl and we would stagger a little when walking. The lack of food became a more serious threat to us as time went on. For several days we did not have one proper meal but thought ourselves lucky if we could fill our stomachs with wild grass. Under these extremely difficult conditions the Party and Youth League members played an exemplary vanguard role and did active propaganda work to encourage and unite everyone as well as keep our morale up. Some comrades, holding their bowl of grass-green gruel, would say cheerily, "Revolutionary fighters fear neither heaven nor earth, and can overcome all difficulties." That is what soldiers in the Red Army were like, full of revolutionary optimism and belief in our inevitable victory, struggling to get to the north and fight the Japanese as well as fighting for the complete liberation of the Chinese people and the people of the world. At the time, Staff Officer Kung suggested I sing a Kiangsi ballad called *Sending My Young Man to Join the Red Army*. I sang without the need of any further prompting:

Send my young man to join the Red Army,
Fearless and brave to fight the enemy.
Poor people, if you want to be free,
Come and join the Red Army. . . .

As soon as I had finished, Comrade Fan Chin-piao sang a Fukien ballad, after which Staff Officer Kung recited a verse he had composed:

Golden chingko *barley, silver* chingko *barley,*
Eat a little and you can walk on.
A mouthful of the barley, a mouthful of water,
A bowl of chingko *keeps us going all day.*

Another comrade continued:

Pea-sprouts,
Sweet and fragrant,
With the boiled barley
It's better than at New Year. . . .

Everyone burst out laughing. And, no less lively than the younger men, Vice-Chairman Chou followed on with a song:

The wind may blow, the rain may fall,
We fear not hunger nor cold,
We'll cross the grasslands, in the north to fight,
The Red Army goes forward so bold.

During this period of crisis Vice-Chairman Chou often told us, "Chairman Mao's revolutionary line is our source of strength for overcoming every hardship," filling us with energy. He also often instructed us to go easy on the *chingko* barley and grass we had, as they were an indispensable source of food. After that we were much more careful with the food, putting any left-over barley into our ration bags. Our supply steadily dwindled till we could virtually count

the grains of barley in our bags. Every time we pitched camp, each of us would make some soup of wild greens. One time, Young Wu vomited a lot of grass-green water while by himself in the grass. When I went to take a look, I found that he had been poisoned from eating a type of grass. Not wanting anyone to know, he had sneaked off to be sick. When Vice-Chairman Chou found out, he was very concerned and asked Wu, "Are you sick?"

"No, I'm not."

"If you're not sick then why did you vomit?"

"It's just. . . ."

"Just what?"

"Just that the wild grass was too bitter and when I ate it I got dizzy and felt weak all over, then when I began to walk I got the runs."

When the Vice-Chairman found out that Young Wu did not have any barley, he told me to divide his own precious supply into two bowls and give one to Young Wu to eat. He also told him that if he still felt ill he should use his horse.

Young Wu was moved to tears and said, "As long as I have any strength left I will follow the Party and Chairman Mao. I vow to make it out of the grasslands even if I have to crawl out. I'm sure I'll get out."

That night, all the guards except for a sentry slept together. At about midnight a strong wind blew up which really froze us, and it was so dark you could not even see your own nose. After a while a pouring rain began to fall, and our makeshift tent leaked badly, leaving us unable to sleep. The bitter wind kept up, chilling us to the bone, and my teeth chattered. As we sat shaking, we took off our wet clothes, wrung them dry, and then put them on again. I thought of saying something but felt as if a lump was lodged in my throat cutting off the breath to speak.

The sound of the falling rain disturbed the Vice-Chairman, who was still hard at work in the small hours of the night. I don't know what time it was, but he came over to us in the rain and said kindly, "Go into the tent out of the rain."

When none of us made a move, he patted us on the shoulder and told us again to go inside. We knew that the tent was already very crowded and if we went in the Vice-Chairman would have no room to work or rest, so one of us said to him, "If we go inside then you won't be able to get any rest!"

Vice-Chairman Chou laughed and said, "If you don't go inside I really won't get any rest!"

His words were full of meaning and class love, and moved us deeply. In the end the Vice-Chairman virtually ordered us to go inside and we finally relented and did so.

Once we were in the tent the Vice-Chairman told us to stay close together for warmth. So, shoulder to shoulder and joined by our common feelings, we spent a memorable night in the Vice-Chairman's tent. Although the cold wind on our wet clothes chilled us to the very bones, the Vice-Chairman's concern and care for us filled us with the warmth of a great class love.

As we moved on, it became more difficult to find edible wild plants, and it was in this crisis that the leadership decided to slaughter some of our horses for meat so as to ensure the victory of the revolution. But there were many more men than horses and soon most of the horses were slaughtered for meat. We then cooked our leather belts and sheepskins for food, first roasting them a bit over a fire and then putting them into a pot to boil. I don't think that anyone today would say that this fare tasted at all good, but at that time it was delicious. When we had finished off the leather articles we had, old books and scrap paper became the

object of our attentions, and we soon swallowed them down too. Later, when there was absolutely nothing left, we could only fill up on cold water. Our stomachs would growl with hunger, and some comrades got bad cramps from the unboiled water. The leadership decided that we should first boil the water, for in that way we could also warm ourselves up a bit!

The critical lack of food very soon depleted our energy reserves, and sick comrades were even worse off. In this situation it was common to see comrades helping each other along and carrying things for each other. One day my stomach was hurting so much that I could not straighten up. There was nothing the doctor or medical attendant could do, for they did not even have any purgatives. Luckily, Young Ku said that he knew of a herb that controlled stomach pains. He told the medical attendant that when he was at home his father had told him of medicines called *leikung* and *yuhsing* grasses. So, on the way we gathered a lot of the herbs, which I washed, chewed and swallowed down. It turned out that the herbs were very effective in treating stomachache. Soon these were in general use. Then just as we were about to leave the grasslands my foot swelled up like a piece of dough. If I pressed it, it left an impression; it felt like a lump of lead and hurt like the devil with every step I took.

It really made me feel desperate to be sick at a time like this. I suddenly remembered a herbal cure and found some plantain, which I brewed in water. After using the brew as a wash and poultice to my foot several times the swelling went down and the pain was relieved so that I was soon up and walking again, which made me very happy. Thus, various herbal medicines and treatments made up for our lack of accustomed drugs.

Some three days before marching out of the grasslands we began hearing frequent, sad reports of comrades perishing because of the chronic lack of food. Some had simply expired in their sleep. I personally knew of two comrades, Tseng Chao-hsi and Chiang Sheng, who seemed quite all right when we set up camp one day, but who failed to appear when reveille sounded the next day. Our conditions were the worst, and we were faced by enormous hardships. Nevertheless, our Red Army soldiers had a high level of political awareness and the heroic stamina to overcome all difficulties. We were sure of victory, and marched on with indomitable will defying the ordeal.

Vice-Chairman Chou, who suffered all that we suffered, told me to mix the last bit of fried *chingko* barley flour and give it to the other comrades to eat. I could not bear to do this, and asked him what he would eat when it was gone.

The Vice-Chairman said to me in a serious tone, "My life is only important if the other comrades are well. To sustain one comrade's life is to increase the strength of the revolution one bit more."

With great reluctance, I took out the last of the very precious flour for the others. The Vice-Chairman's care at that time saved the lives of many comrades. I'll never forget his self-sacrificing spirit of a true communist who held the lives of his comrades dearer than his own. The comrades said, "The Vice-Chairman had shown such care for us that we swear to continue on as long as we breathe. We vow to get out of the grasslands."

The grasslands constituted the most difficult part of the Long March. Due to the correct leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao, the concern of our leaders, our comrades' high level of class love and everyone's tireless struggle, we

overcame the difficulties as they arose and succeeded in marching out of the grasslands.

It is now more than forty years since the Long March. Every time I think of those days I remember how many comrades sacrificed their precious lives on the cruel flats of the grasslands! All of their warmth and energy was given to the revolution. They thought of the revolution to their last moment, hoping with their last breath to get one step nearer to the north and the front line against Japanese aggression. The victory of the Long March was the great victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. The results of the revolution were achieved only at the cost of countless martyrs' lives. We will never forget those fine men and women who sacrificed themselves in working for the cause of the Party and the people. We will keep firmly in mind the great leader Chairman Mao's instruction:

"Thousands upon thousands of martyrs have heroically laid down their lives for the people; let us hold their banner high and march ahead along the path crimson with their blood!"

Crossing the Houho River

Marching through the grasslands, all we could see in any direction was grass, which seemed to link heaven and earth and make the whole world seem virtually nothing but grass. Grass, grass, grass — it covered everything. But the Chinese people's fine sons and daughters, brave soldiers of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, entering the trackless grasslands gave everything added life.

I remember having to cross the Houho River on the third day there. That afternoon, Vice-Chairman Chou and the rest of us arrived at the river bank. It was raining heavily and the water was visibly rising. Just as our troops were preparing to make the crossing, some enemy cavalry suddenly appeared in front and to the right of us, approaching to make a raid. Fortunately, Comrade Chen Keng arrived just in time at the head of a regiment of cadres and repelled the attack so that we suffered no casualties.

When Vice-Chairman Chou saw what the situation was, he disregarded his poor health and hurried down to the river bank to organize the crossing of the river. He first called on a comrade to test the depth; the water was chest-high. Not only was the flow very rapid, the silt at the bottom was like quicksand. The man testing the depth could not keep his balance and was almost swept away by the rip. The Vice-Chairman shouted to him to get out of the river quickly, that we would find another way to cross.

Just then Commander Chen Keng returned after frustrating the enemy's attack, and Vice-Chairman Chou instructed him to have everyone undo his leggings and tie and twist them together into a rope. A comrade who was a good swimmer was to swim across with the rope, then the rest of the troops would wade across by holding onto it. Three groups had crossed over when the rope broke. It wasn't stout enough, too many people crossed at once, and the river was flowing too rapidly. The second time we tried, the Vice-Chairman had the rope made thicker and only a few people were to cross at a time. In this way all the troops crossed safely over the Houho River.

Vice-Chairman Chou stood watching the crossing from the bank. When almost all the men were over, he too wanted to cross over on the rope. But how could we let him? The water was deep and turbulent, and he was not well. But before I had thought of any way to stop him, he was already walking to the water's edge. Luckily Comrade Chen Keng came up and grabbed him, saying, "Comrade Vice-Chairman, you can't!"

He turned to Comrade Chen Keng and said warmly, "Yes, I can. If everyone else can cross this way, so can I!"

"You're ill, how can you cross?" Commander Chen said agitatedly.

"It doesn't matter," replied the Vice-Chairman, starting towards the water.

Regimental Commander Chen rushed over, took hold of him again and said severely, "No! In other matters I unquestionably obey you, but this time you'll have to listen to me. You had better cross on a stretcher."

The comrades who were standing by agreed with Comrade Chen Keng, for they were afraid that if the Vice-Chairman was chilled in the water his illness would flare up again, and

so they spoke up and won out over the Vice-Chairman's protests.

After we had crossed over, about a dozen comrades remained on the bank. They were young and small in size, and it would have been difficult for them to cross, even with the rope to hang onto. Vice-Chairman Chou looked at these "little devils"* on the opposite bank and called to me, "Wei Kuo-lu, bring them across on the animal."

When I crossed back, the boys were delighted and were just climbing onto the animal's back when I said, "Not that way, only three at a time." They were so anxious to get across the river that they didn't even hear me. Those who could not get up on the animal hung onto its neck or clutched at its tail, so three or four were able to cross at a time. In this way I managed to take everyone across in three or four trips.

After the young fellows had crossed the river, they surrounded Vice-Chairman Chou and asked him lots of questions. Some had tears in their eyes as they said, "Thank you for getting us across like that!"

The Vice-Chairman patted them on the shoulder and encouraged them saying, "You're young heroes, every one of you. Make an effort and we'll all cross the grasslands victoriously!"

These "little devils," cared for and encouraged by Vice-Chairman Chou, continued the march in high spirits.

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* A tune of endearment for youngsters with the Red Army.

Into the Depths of the Grasslands

The further we got into the grasslands, the more forlorn we felt. It was cloudy and drizzly most of the time, and not even a bird was to be seen. Through the wild grasses, mud and desolation of this uninhabited strange world that was the grasslands the Red Army pressed forward on its Long March. Young people are better able to cope with the hardships before them, but what upset us was that Vice-Chairman Chou had not fully regained his health since we left Maoerhkai. The Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao were very concerned about this and told him to rest more often. But he never stopped working. At night, when everyone else was asleep, he would be up checking on camp conditions, returning only to sit on his pack and lean over his document-case reading documents and telegrams and working on problems by the dim, yellow light of a butter lamp, often continuing late into the night. We both admired and worried about the Vice-Chairman going on working in spite of his illness. What we really appreciated was Vice-Chairman Chou's and the other Party leaders' working non-stop, forgetting both food and sleep in their preoccupation with the work of carrying out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and fighting for the liberation of all mankind. In him we saw the lofty image of a proletarian revolutionary, the hope of the deeply troubled and burdened people of all nationalities. But we also worried about him, for in the vast expanse of the grasslands he was weighed down with both

work and illness. Like the rest of us, he had only a little *chingko* barley at each meal, sometimes without so much as a little hot water to wash it down. Many strong, young men had been overcome by these harsh conditions, so how could we not be concerned for our leader's health?

Vice-Chairman Chou, however, saw things in a completely different light. He did not regard himself as being ill and therefore never demanded any special treatment. Although he would be exhausted by the end of the day, he was always bright and in high spirits. Sometimes when he saw that we were tired he would encourage us along with revolutionary stories, and when he spoke with the other leaders you could always hear his cheery laughter. He really amazed us: where did his energy come from? His revolutionary enthusiasm made us forget our own weariness.

Another thing happened on the grasslands concerning Vice-Chairman Chou that I will never forget. As he had not yet fully recovered before leaving Maoerhkai, the Supply Department had gone to no little trouble to buy some powdered beef which I carried on the march to give the Vice-Chairman. This powdered beef was made from dried, cooked beef. I mixed half a bowl of it for him the first night we were in the grasslands, and as he ate it he told us warmly, "Leave the beef powder for when we really need it. For now I'll be all right eating our barley flour." This puzzled us, for were not the grasslands already hard enough? When would we be having it harder? Though we felt this way, we did what the Vice-Chairman suggested and left some for yet harder times.

Some days later, as we were marching, a youngish soldier up in front of us reeled a few times and then collapsed into the muddy grass by the road. The Vice-Chairman rushed to

the man's side and asked in great agitation, "What is it, my young comrade? Are you sick?"

Opening his eyes and seeing that it was Vice-Chairman Chou, the young soldier tried to pull himself together and answered, "No . . . no, I'm not sick."

"Then why can't you walk?"

The soldier hesitated. "I haven't eaten for two days, and I'm hungry, so. . . ."

"So?"

"I feel as if I've got no strength, and I blacked out."

Vice-Chairman Chou turned to me and said, "Wei Kuo-lu, give him a bowl of the powdered beef."

I made a bowl for him rather reluctantly, as it was the last I had and I did not know what I would be able to give the Vice-Chairman to eat. I looked at the hungry comrade on the ground, then at the Vice-Chairman, pointed at my bag and said, "There are only a few bowls left."

The Vice-Chairman understood what I meant and said persuasively, "No, there isn't much left. But we can't let a comrade starve to death by the road, can we?"

"Of course not!" I replied.

Vice-Chairman Chou was pleased that I agreed. "That's right, give him a bowl and get him some hot water to drink. When he has eaten we can go on together."

I measured out a bowl of the yellowish beef powder which the Vice-Chairman took and handed to the hungry comrade. Then, as tenderly as though he were caring for a sick child, he said, "Eat up, then you'll have the strength to march."

The comrade struggled into a sitting position, waved his hands at the Vice-Chairman and agitatedly said, "No, no. I don't want any. Keep it for yourself. If I eat it, you'll have nothing."

The Vice-Chairman urged him, "You have some first. You're so hungry you can't even march, why shouldn't you eat a little."

Those of us standing close by encouraged him to eat so as not to keep the Vice-Chairman waiting too long. The comrade finally mixed some of the water I had brought him with the powder and ate half a bowl. The Vice-Chairman told him to keep the other half for the next meal.

Men are iron and food is steel. As soon as he had something to eat, that comrade had the energy to stand up and walk. But he was still weak, and the Vice-Chairman offered him his horse to ride. The lad firmly refused however. "I can walk all right. Thank you for your kindness, Vice-Chairman." So saying he saluted and marched on ahead.

The Vice-Chairman's face broke out in a smile of satisfaction as he watched the comrade step forward.

This incident made me appreciate the real meaning of the Vice-Chairman's words: "Leave the beef powder for when we really need it!"

Our Party Cell

Late in June 1935, after the Red Army had overcome numerous difficulties and successfully scaled the snow mountains, we came to a region called Lianghokou in Szechuan where we settled down to rest for a few days. The Party leadership of the General Headquarters staff took this opportunity to carry out a Party reorganization, re-elect Party branch committee members and have each small Party group elect new leaders.

Vice-Chairman Chou, Comrade Chang Yun-yi and several staff officers from Headquarters were in our Party group. At one meeting, Comrade Chang Yun-yi nominated me to be the head of the group. Vice-Chairman Chou smiled at me and said, "A very good choice, I agree."

Everyone else agreed too, which made me feel very uneasy, for I was surrounded by a Vice-Chairman and other leaders as well as staff officers. How could a mere guard like me be in charge of a Party group with them in it?

Flushing in embarrassment I said, "I'm not qualified for the position, it would be better to select some other comrade."

Seeing that I did not want to be group leader, Vice-Chairman Chou encouraged me, "Since everyone wants you to, it shows we all believe that you can do the job well and will be sure to follow your leadership. After all, if we have any problems in our small group in the future then we can discuss them together." He stopped for a moment and then

asked me, "Well, how about it? Do you agree with what I have said?"

It looked as if I could not get out of it. That's democracy, the minority has to follow the majority, so all I could do was to try my best. Thus I became the leader of our small group.

According to the directive of the Party branch secretary, Comrade Kang Ke-ching, after electing a group leader we should discuss the future duties and work of the small group. During this discussion the Vice-Chairman expressed his opinion: "We are now on the Long March and our small group should ensure that none of us falls behind so that all of us will make it to the front line against Japanese aggression. Therefore, while marching we should promote the spirit of class love and help each other."

Everyone agreed to the Vice-Chairman's suggestion and we decided to make "assuring that no one falls behind" one of the important duties of our small group for the remainder of the Long March. From then on, until we reached northern Shensi, the Vice-Chairman's example and everyone's concerted efforts assured nobody's falling behind, and we all reached our destination all right.

Although the Vice-Chairman's work during the Long March was time-consuming, he always paid strict attention to participating in the Party's organizational life no matter how busy he was with his other duties or how strenuous were the fighting and marching. Once, when I was looking after his dinner, he suddenly asked, "Group Leader, why haven't we had a group meeting recently?"

"We have, but you were busy and I didn't tell you," I immediately replied.

"Huh! That won't do at all! I'm a Party member and should participate in the Party's organizational life. If I was

really busy with something else, I could ask you for leave. But it was wrong not to tell me about the meeting at all."

I did not think it was such a serious matter. As I saw it, a leader might miss a few small group meetings without doing any harm. Vice-Chairman Chou, however, criticized me far more seriously than usual for my oversight. In the end he said to me in a familiar tone, "Every person in our Party is an ordinary member, every Party member should take part in the Party's organizational life. Don't you see that this is a question of Párty spirit? Whenever we're to have meetings in the future you must inform me too."

I learned from my mistake and notified him of every meeting, and he attended every one he could, always giving full expression to his ideas.

One day after we had reached northern Shensi, I was in his office cleaning a desk when he came in. Taking out his documents to work, he said to me, "Group Leader, I haven't paid my Party dues for this month yet, have I?"

"Yes, you have, I paid five cents for you."

"What you gave was for yourself. How can one person pay for another?"

"But you've been concentrating on important matters of state. Isn't it just the same if I pay for you?" I was convinced that I was right.

"Paying one's Party dues is as important as matters of state, for it's the duty of every Party member." When he finished speaking he looked me in the eye as if to say, "Do you understand?"

During the six months that I was a small group leader I cannot say I was any help to anybody else, but I certainly learned a great deal myself, especially with regard to training in the Party spirit. In this, Vice-Chairman Chou set a fine example for us all.

Everlasting Gratitude

We set out from Lianghokou, and on the first day of the march I came down with malaria. It was an awful disease to have. When the fever came on, my temperature went so high that I was only half-conscious, and I felt as though I was in a furnace. Then there were the chills, when I felt as if I was in cold-storage and would shiver so much that my teeth chattered and I could not stretch out, even my hands or feet. I did not tell the Vice-Chairman that I was sick so as not to worry him, and I purposely fell back to the rear of the troops.

One day when we were still some five kilometres from camp, my temperature went very high. I forced myself to go on but in the end had to rest by the roadside next to a pond. After lying down I just could not get up again but fell unconscious. After some time I was wakened by some strange noise. I was shocked to see some ten or so armed local bandits coming towards me from the woods by the road. Now, the danger Red Army soldiers who fell behind sought to avoid came from these cut-throats who would kill you to get whatever you had. Many of our comrades had lost their lives at the hands of such reactionaries. Remembering this I quickly came to my senses and took out my Mauser pistol.

Just then men of the 3rd Army Group came marching along, and not a minute too soon. The cut-throats fled back into the woods yelling in panic as soon as they saw the

Red troops. The regimental commander of the 13th Regiment of the 3rd Army Group (unfortunately I have forgotten his name and all I can remember about him is that he had a scar on his face from a gun-shot wound) came up to me, and pointing in the direction of the fleeing bandits said, "Did you see them? That was nearly the end of you!"

"I saw them. But really I. . . ."

As I spoke I put my pistol in its holster and stood up gritting my teeth. Suddenly everything went dark around me and it was only due to the regimental commander's holding me up that I didn't keel over. A few comrades came over and took my pack. The commander told two men to help me along until we reached the camp.

When the Vice-Chairman learned that I was sick on the way, he waited anxiously for me to get to the camp, and upon my arrival said in a tone that was both pained and upbraiding, "What's wrong with you? Why didn't you tell anyone you were sick?"

What could I say to him? In a while the Vice-Chairman brought me a bowl of potatoes and said, "Eat something and have a good rest. Tomorrow you can ride my horse. I won't let you fall behind again!"

Looking into our leader's kind face I was moved to tears.

Not long after I recovered from my bout of malaria something again went wrong with my foot. Like the first time, it swelled up like a piece of dough and left an impression when pressed. Every step I took was agony. The Vice-Chairman let me ride his horse while he walked like everyone else. I was ill at ease doing this, for the Vice-Chairman was emaciated and still not completely recovered from his recent illness. I got off many times and asked him to ride but he simply would not. Sometimes when my foot was

especially painful and I could not mount the horse by myself, the Vice-Chairman would help me up.

I really had bad luck, plagued with one trouble after another. My foot was no sooner better than I got an eye infection. My eyes went red and I could not see properly. Medical supplies were scarce and the doctor did not have anything to treat me with, not even a little boracic acid for washing. The thought of going blind made me cry a few times out of desperation. When the Vice-Chairman knew, he comforted me and said, "Don't be upset. Try and find some pig's liver, cook it without salt and eat it with the water you cooked it in. You may also put a little salt in hot water, make a compress of it with clean cotton-wool and put that over your eyes before you go to sleep."

I was so anxious for my eyes to get better that I tried both of the Vice-Chairman's methods. In the day I ate the pig's liver and at night I used the salt water compress. They worked very well, and by the third day my eyes were better. I really admired the Vice-Chairman for his practical knowledge. He even knew how to cure eye trouble.

During the time I was sick I got a deep impression of the class love in our revolutionary ranks. It was the Party's sustenance and a lofty and great class love that enabled me to overcome recurring illness and live through the hard days of the Long March, to become a revolutionary fighter of and for the people.

"We Cannot Violate Policy."

By the middle of September 1935, the Red Army had crossed the towering Minshan Mountains and the desolate grasslands and had entered the Moslem area of Kansu. So that we should respect the customs and habits of the minority-nationality people, political instructors from Headquarters gave us a few lessons as an introduction to the beliefs and habits of the Moslem people. I remember that besides reminding us of "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention" they also laid down the following new rules: Do not eat pork in the Moslem area; Do not take or use anything belonging to the Moslem people without their permission; Do not stay in any Moslem person's house without consultation and agreement; . . . Vice-Chairman Chou often told us, "Our Moslem brothers do not have the same customs and habits as we Han people do. We are the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and we must respect the customs and habits of our Moslem compatriots and watch the impression we give." The talks given to us by the leaders and the lessons we had from the Party organization made us meticulously careful. Once after we had made camp and wanted to borrow a pot to cook the Vice-Chairman a meal, we could not find any of the local people who would loan us one. I was so frustrated that I complained: "Funny people here!"

I did not expect that when the Vice-Chairman overheard this he would take it up with me. "If you can't borrow a

pot then forget it. Think of another way! Why react like this?"

"Forget it? How can we cook without a pot, and how can we eat without cooking?" I replied.

Vice-Chairman Chou said to me very gravely, "We cannot violate policy even if we have to go hungry. Don't you understand that this is a rule of the Red Army, comrade?"

I didn't say any more and simply had to think of another way.

The next day's march was climbing mountains from the beginning. And though the mountains were not high, they seemed endless, one peak after another appearing ahead. We walked the whole day on those barren mountain-tops and still saw no end of them. In the evening we stayed in a very small mountain village where drinking water was said to be scarcer than oil. All the several dozen households of the village depended on a single well about thirty metres deep, and with all of our troops arriving at once, it really was a problem.

Wu Sheng-kai and I borrowed a water bucket from a villager. We took two coils of well rope and went to fetch some water. Many comrades were already waiting at the well, so it took a long time for us to get a turn. Then, we carelessly broke the bucket and so did not get a single drop of water. We were both very upset. Not only had we broken the bucket, we had broken discipline, for which we would have to pay and be criticized. More serious was that the Vice-Chairman, who was very thirsty after the long trek and would be working hard, would not have any water to drink. How could we not be worried? There was nothing for it but to go back and borrow another bucket.

Fan Chin-piao had been waiting anxiously for us, and as soon as we got back, shot out the question;

"Where have you been to buy water that you should come back so late?"

I said, "It'd be all right if we could buy water! But unfortunately in this place you can't buy the stuff even if you have the money. We not only haven't got any water, we've broken the bucket we borrowed from the villager."

Grumbling at each other, we went out again to borrow another bucket. By the time we had brought back the water, boiled it and given some to the Vice-Chairman it was already nine o'clock. Our leader said nothing about eating and drinking so late, but he did make a serious criticism of us for breaking the villager's bucket as he did on other occasions when we damaged things we borrowed from the local people. "Why should you be so careless, comrades? Now that you've broken their bucket what are they supposed to fetch water in? You must take the responsibility for correcting the bad impression this has made. Hurry up and find out how much the bucket cost, pay the villager for it and make sure you make a proper apology to him!"

Fighting Enemy Cavalry on Watershed Ridge

A new situation arose when we arrived in Kansu. We often came upon enemy cavalry, which up to now we had not encountered. Because fighting cavalry was a new problem, our great leader Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Chou and the other leaders often studied and discussed new tactics. All of the troops were educated at that time in fighting cavalry, and even a few songs on the subject were composed and proved very popular among us. One of the songs went like this:

The enemy's cavalry we've no need to fear,
Sedately and nimbly we'll hit them from here.
The target is big and easy to get,
Fire in fast volleys and catch them in a net.
We take aim,
Knock them down!
We exterminate them!
The iron Red Army peerless are we,
Of robber Chiang's millions there's no more to see.
We must carefully learn how to fight cavalry,
So the hundredth battle is the hundredth victory.

One day the army reached Watershed Ridge at Wuchi-chen on the Kansu-Shensi border. There we suddenly came across the cavalry of the northwestern warlords Ma Hung-kuei and Ma Pu-fang. After our spearhead troops had engaged the enemy, Vice-Chairman Chou and General Chief

of Staff Yeh Chien-ying quickly went to the front line and directed the fighting from a small mountain slope.

Our forces remained calm and took aim from a great distance, waiting for the enemy to come into range, with both rifles and machine-guns ready. The fierce-looking enemy cavalry had a rough time of it as we could see clearly from the mountainside. Some horses were killed by our fire, and their fallen riders, having become foot soldiers, ran for their lives, while enemy soldiers killed outright with their feet in the stirrups were dragged over the mountain. The enemy was like a flock of frightened birds — men running into each other and horses colliding. In a very short time our army had completely wiped out the enemy force and captured a lot of spoils of victory and horses. I said to Staff Officer Kung and Comrade Fan Chin-piao, "The enemy's cavalry is like an array of tin soldiers, one blow and they collapse!"

Vice-Chairman Chou was very happy and went on to say, "We are the iron Red Army that are invincible. There's no question of them doing anything but collapse!"

After the battle, the men presented the Vice-Chairman with a mottled horse. Some of our leaders had had horses to start out with, but in crossing the snowy mountains and the grasslands the animals had been killed and eaten, or else had died on the road and most of the leaders had proceeded on foot as did the soldiers. Now they took over their new mounts. This victory over the cavalry dispelled all our doubts about fighting mounted troops and greatly enhanced our men's fighting spirit. To celebrate the victory we held a grand meeting at which everyone sang songs they had composed themselves:

In September blows the wind of autumn,
To Watershed Ridge the Red Army caught 'em.
We beat the cavalry and infantry in a minute,
To save the country and the people in it.

The next day we set off again on the Long March, everyone feeling unspeakably happy as we continued on our way to the North Shensi Soviet Area.

"We've Won Through!"

In October 1935 we entered Kansu, where on the march one day Vice-Chairman Chou told us excitedly, "We've done it! The Red Army in northern Shensi has already sent people to link up with us and we'll soon be joining forces."

We were really happy on hearing this news. In political instruction classes the question of why we were on the Long March had often been brought up. Of course, the answer was to reach northern Shensi and link up with the Red Army there in order to resist Japanese aggression and save our country from subjugation and to carry out the revolution. How could we be anything but happy now that we were about to reach our destination? It is certainly true what we say, that "people's spirits perk up when good news comes their way." We were so excited at the prospect of being right on the brink of success that we forgot all about being tired.

Vice-Chairman Chou was also in high spirits that day. As he marched along with us, he told us revolutionary stories, the funny bits making us roar with laughter. For some reason, amidst all this merriment I thought of the Vice-Chairman's carrier, Old Li, a good comrade who died on the Long March, and said wistfully, "What a pity Comrade Li Tso-li isn't still alive and coming to north Shensi with us." This rather dampened the proceedings and everyone went quiet.

Vice-Chairman Chou stopped smiling and said sorrowfully, "Yes, we've lost a lot of first-class comrades on the Long March; we must never forget them." After a short pause, gesturing with his hand he said confidently, "But our Red Army is like a tree that has been through a storm: it's lost some leaves and branches, but the trunk and roots are intact. Do you see? The trunk and roots are intact!"

At the time we didn't quite understand the profound meaning of the Vice-Chairman's analogy, but we believed that he was right.

In mid-October we reached Wuchichen. This was a fair-sized busy market town. Things were not expensive: for three yuan in silver you could buy a pig which would yield over fifty kilogrammes of meat. While we rested there for a few days, we used the "mess savings" we had left over from our food allowance and bought some eggs to give ourselves a treat. But Vice-Chairman Chou saw us and asked us where we had got so many eggs. Had we broken the rules of discipline? He also asked if the other leaders had any. Finally he instructed us, "You must strictly observe discipline. As we are the Central Red Army we must be especially particular about this."

The Vice-Chairman often gave us instruction of this sort. Every time he came across anything that was generally in short supply, even if it was bought, issued or had been sent by someone as a gift, he would always inquire as to where it had come from and then ask whether the others had any. If the others had none, then he would have us keep only a little and send the rest to them, or have us invite the others to eat with us when it was ready. With Vice-Chairman Chou, we were strictly forbidden to enjoy any special privileges.

The Central Red Army reached Changtsunyi in November. In order to smash the "encirclement and suppression campaign" which the traitor Chiang Kai-shek was directing at the Shensi-Kansu border area, Chairman Mao decided to concentrate all the forces of the Red Army that had linked up in Shensi and launch head-on a full-scale attack against the enemy in the Chihlochen area. The evening we arrived at Changtsunyi, Chairman Mao, Vice-Chairman Chou and Comrade Yeh Chien-ying immediately convened a meeting with Cheng Tzu-hua, Hsu Hai-tung and a few other comrades to discuss preparations for battle, and in the early hours of the morning they all went out to inspect the front line.

At this time, our 1st, 3rd and 15th Army Groups had surrounded an enemy division and a regiment at Chihlochen. Chairman Mao personally directed this battle. As soon as the leaders reached the front line, our forces launched a full-scale attack. The enemy "beancurd soldiers" could not withstand the crushing blow of our iron fist and by dawn the enemy's whole division had been annihilated; the regiment, which fled, was pursued and also wiped out.

When the battle was over, the leaders came out of the command post, climbed the hill facing the rising sun and surveyed what a few hours before had been a battlefield. Enemy dead were strewn all over, and those taken prisoner were being escorted along in droves. Our brave Red soldiers were busy marching the prisoners off and clearing up the battlefield. A triumphant smile appeared on Vice-Chairman Chou's face.

After this victory, we pressed on to Panlungchen. On the way a heavy snow began to fall, but our iron-like force progressed quickly through its gleaming white expanse. A piercing, chill wind was blowing, but although we were still

in single-layer clothes, short pants and straw sandals, we did not feel the cold for the joy of victory.

Reaching Panlungchen was like returning to the Kiangsi Soviet Area. The people here were just like those in Kiangsi, treating the Red Army men as their own people. They warmed the platform beds for us to sleep on, gave us the best food they had, and would go to any lengths to look after us. We ate and slept better that evening than we had since setting out on the Long March.

The next day we started out for the final destination of the Long March — Wayaopao. This was an unforgettable day — the last on the Long March. Everyone was jubilant and cheerful; songs of victory and delight resounded far and wide. Fan Chin-piao began to sing at the top of his voice one of the marching songs that had been very popular in Kiangsi:

If you're going to be a soldier join the Red Army,
Everywhere the workers and peasants will come to welcome you,
There's no distinction between officers and men,
And no one oppresses anyone else.

I also sang a ditty from my home in Kiangsi:

Go home, sister, go on home,
Stop worrying and no more roam.
The Government will people send
To till our field and be our friend.

. . . . . .

This drew a peal of laughter.

Vice-Chairman Chou was just as lively as the young people and joined in the songs that the others were singing.

Just after three in the afternoon we entered Wayaopao by the south gate, where we were warmly greeted by the local

people, old and young alike. The crowds shouted slogans, clapped, laughed and sang, which gave me a feeling of tremendous warmth. I was so moved, in fact, that tears of happiness ran down my face and every trace of the weariness from being on the march for over a year was suddenly gone.

"I Can Wear This One More Winter."

When we reached Wayaopao we moved into light, spacious brick-fronted cave houses and slept on delightfully warm earthen platform beds. We were extremely grateful to the revolutionary masses and our Red Army brothers of north Shensi who had arranged everything for us so perfectly. There was a set fee for food of three cents per person per day. The food was quite good and sometimes included pork. After a short while, the Supply Department gave out new padded clothes and shoes. Although I felt a bit awkward when I first put on these unfamiliar clothes, they were really far better than the worn-out short trousers and sheepskin vest I had been wearing. Having been through every kind of hardship and difficulty, we felt most content now that we were warm and well-fed.

However, many days after we had put on our padded clothes, Vice-Chairman Chou was still wearing the wool-padded jacket we had made for him at Maoerhkai, and now the wool was showing through in several places. At first we thought that the Supply Department was probably making special arrangements for the leaders and would make him better clothes, but several more days passed and still nothing happened. I then went over to the Supply Department to see what was going on. One of the comrades there told me with a very awkward look on his face, "The Vice-Chairman doesn't want new clothes, what can I do about it?"

Was it right for the Vice-Chairman not to have new clothes? I returned to discuss the matter with him. "Look, that jacket of yours is already worn out. We're all wearing padded clothes. Shouldn't you have a new outfit?" I said.

The Vice-Chairman took a good look at himself and then running his hand over his jacket fondly replied, "No, I don't want any new clothes. I can wear this one more winter."

"But it's already in tatters," I said hurriedly.

"Then I'll ask you to find someone to take it apart, wash it and mend it." He paused, saw that I was muttering under my breath, and said patiently, "The front line soldiers have to fight in this freezing weather, but some of them have no padded clothes to wear."

Once again, I was silenced by the Vice-Chairman's argument. However, I could not just watch the Vice-Chairman braving the cold wind to go out to meetings, and so a few of us discussed the matter and decided to present him with a "*fait accompli.*" We would bring over the new clothes first and tell him later. We fetched over a padded outfit from the Supply Department, but when the Vice-Chairman discovered what we had done, he criticized us sharply and made us take it back. The comrade in the Supply Department gave us an I-told-you-so look and said, "Well, wasn't it any good then? It would take more than you few men to carry out a mission as big as that!" I gave the comrade a playful thump and walked off.

Going Off to Study

In settled surroundings, time seemed to pass extremely rapidly. Before we knew it, it was already that wonderful time of year when the ice floes on the river break up and everything comes back to life again. How beautiful the spring of 1936 was!

One afternoon, Vice-Chairman Chou, not having gone out to attend any meeting, was working in his quarters. I was outside in the courtyard, sitting reading the paper in the sunshine when Staff Officer Wang from Headquarters came out of the Vice-Chairman's office. As he was leaving, he told me that the Vice-Chairman had something he wanted to see me about.

I put the paper down and rushed into the office to see what was up.

"Sit down," said the Vice-Chairman with a smile, indicating the seat facing him.

His manner confused me. Up until now he had always been very informal when he called for me. Why was he being so courteous today? It was just as if he were receiving a guest — he had even asked me to sit down! Not knowing what it was all about I could not help but be slightly apprehensive.

However, it seemed as if Vice-Chairman Chou could tell what I was thinking, for, after I had sat down, he said to me warmly, "You did very well on the Long March, but we've reached the Yenan area now. The Red Army Academy

is seeking students from among the veterans. Would you be willing to go?"

It was only when I heard that I was being asked to go and study that my doubts left me. But I was soon weighed down with many other worries: Would it be possible for me to study properly as I could barely read and write? If I left, who would look after Vice-Chairman Chou? I thought it over for a while before replying:

"I've never had much education and I don't think I'd make a very good student; besides, I don't want to leave you. . . ."

"Comrade Wei Kuo-lu, the revolution is advancing very rapidly now; there is a pressing need for loyal and reliable cadres." As he spoke, he got up and, coming over in front of me, said, "In the past we were always on the march, fighting all day long. Even if we wanted to study we didn't have the chance. But now the opportunity to study has presented itself. If you go to school you'll be able to do even more for the revolution in the future, don't you agree?"

"Well, yes, but I'm afraid I won't be able to keep up in class. And besides, you have to have someone here to look after you."

"As long as you're willing to work hard you'll have no trouble keeping up. There'll be several other guards from General Headquarters going to study too. They'll be in the same boat as you. As for my work, Fan Chin-piao will still be here, so you can go without having to worry about me."

So it was decided that I should go to school. I was feeling so excited after leaving the Vice-Chairman's office that I couldn't finish my supper that night. So many memories flooded my mind that it was a long time before I finally got to sleep. The unforgettable image of Vice-Chairman Chou on the Long March appeared before my eyes once again.

The next day I got up very early and subconsciously rushed over to the Vice-Chairman's office. It was furnished in a very spartan fashion: a few chairs, two desks on one of which were books, magazines and newspapers, as before. On the desk at which he worked lay a holder with several writing brushes in it, and a large, brass ink-box. How familiar this scene was. Before, these things had never meant particularly much to me. It was only now that I was about to leave that everything in the room became very dear to me. Granted, I had carried them all the way from distant Kiangsi Province to north Shensi, but the feeling I had arose mainly from the close association that these objects had with Vice-Chairman Chou and his daily life. Now that I was soon to be going to a new place, leaving behind the leader I so highly esteemed and the work I was so accustomed to, I could not help but feel very sad.

It was just at this moment that Vice-Chairman Chou came into the office. Fearing that he would see me in tears, I hurriedly turned my face away and was about to start sweeping the floor. I had just picked up the broom when he asked:

"When do you leave?"

"Tomorrow morning," I replied, giving him the time that was on the notification of departure that I had received.

"Well, then, there's no need for you to work. You should get your things ready and rest." As he was saying this he took two small note-books and a photograph of himself together with his wife Comrade Teng Ying-chao out of a drawer.

"Here, take these. I don't have anything else to give you as a parting present. You'll be able to use the note-books when you're studying; keep the photo as a memento."

On the note-books he had inscribed in his own hand, "Study hard! I wish you success in you studies." I could not say a word, it was just as if there was something stuck in my throat and I couldn't hold back my tears.

Seeing how disconsolate I was, Vice-Chairman Chou got up and patting me on the head affectionately said comfortingly, "Don't take it so hard. Wayaopao isn't far from the Red Army Academy. You can come and visit me here on Sundays if you've got the time."

"Yes," I murmured, and after saluting him, I left.

I studied for three months at the Red Army Academy and was then transferred to the training division; later I was assigned to the Second Bureau as a political instructor. I missed Vice-Chairman Chou very much and often wished I could pay him a visit, but feared I would interrupt his work or disturb him. Later on, while I was in Yenan, I thought many times I would go and see him, but somehow or other I never quite made it. There were times when I was near Yangchialing, where he lived, but I had second thoughts and turned back.

However, one morning in the autumn of 1937 the opportunity to see him finally presented itself. I was working in the office when suddenly I heard our bureau director, Comrade Tseng Hsi-sheng calling me. As soon as I went out I saw that Vice-Chairman Chou had come. Delighted, I rushed up to him.

He shook my hand warmly and asked, "How's your work coming along? How have you been keeping?"

I was so excited that I did not know exactly what to say. "Fine! Everything's fine!" I stammered. To this very day I regret that though I had missed the Vice-Chairman so much, I did not even salute him, or ask him how he was.

It was only after the Vice-Chairman, accompanied by Comrade Tseng, had departed, and I had calmed down a bit that I wondered how he had found out where I was working. According to the others, he had come to make an inspection. Entering the premises, he had noticed my name on a list of our volleyball team members which had been put up on a wall, and had asked Comrade Tseng if I worked there. On finding out that I did, he told Comrade Tseng to call for me at once. It was really a coincidence! Although it was nearly two years since I had left the Vice-Chairman, and though he was very busy, he still thought of me. When he found out where I was working he asked me to come and see him, which made me really happy.

I have rarely seen him in the twenty or so years that have passed since I left his side. Yet, whenever I take out the memento he gave me and look at it, my spirits are greatly lifted. The photograph he gave me, and which I always carry with me, never fails to inspire me with the confidence and determination to surmount all difficulties. I never recall the arduous Long March and those days when I worked at the Vice-Chairman's side without feeling the utmost gratitude and heartfelt longing for the leader who guided me and cared for me so painstakingly.

APPENDIX:

A Joyful Reunion

On the afternoon of August 29, 1959, I received a telephone message: Premier Chou had invited me to visit him in his home at 11:30 the following morning, on Sunday. I felt suffused with a warm glow, and was moved to tears at the news. This was really a happy moment in my life!

It had been twenty-two years since I had last seen Premier Chou. That was in Yenan in 1937. During this long time he had always remained in my thoughts. Especially after we entered Peking, the great joy of life after the victory of the revolution often led me to recall those days together with him on the Long March. I often thought back how Premier Chou had given me advice and shown such care for me during those hard and difficult years. Whenever I remember the past, memories of Premier Chou's moving and glorious deeds on the Long March pass through my mind like a film, scene by scene. Each time I relive this period in my mind, my respect, yearning and gratitude for our leader deepened. I felt more and more that I should go and see Premier Chou. But he was so busy. His every moment was precious, and I wondered how I could so much as think of disturbing him. For many years I was in two minds — longing to see him, yet afraid of troubling him.

Now that the wish I had long dreamed of was finally to become a reality I could not help being excited! Also, Pre-

mier Chou was devoting all his time to important matters of state and international affairs; his work kept him extremely busy, yet he still remembered the former subordinates and personal guards who had worked under him in the past and had invited us to visit him despite his load of work. How could one not be moved?

I could not sleep that night, for my mind was full of memories of the past. One moment I would recall the snow-capped mountains with their piercing wind and thin air; the next moment I would remember the perpetually misty, desolate areas of the grasslands which seemed to stretch on without end. Then, I recalled the unforgettable occasions when Premier Chou gave me potatoes to eat with his own hands, and how he himself had helped me onto his horse. Bringing myself back to the present again, I would glance at my watch, eager for the dawn and the happy event that was to take place at 11:30. The hour hand seemed to move slower than it ever had before.

August 30, 1959 was one of the few fine days that we had during that rainy year in Peking. It was also a happy day that I would remember for the rest of my life. As the car sped along the wide street on its way to Premier Chou's residence, the sight of happy faces flashed by, a sign that the Communique of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the decision to step up production and prevent waste had brought joy to the people and strengthened their resolve. The sounds of propaganda teams' gongs and drums filled the air, creating a festive atmosphere which immersed the whole of Peking in joyful celebration.

At 11:30, those of us who had been invited by Premier Chou converged at his residence from different places at almost the same time. Premier Chou had not yet returned

from a meeting of the Central Committee, and Comrade Teng Ying-chao, simply dressed, welcomed us warmly in the bright and spacious reception room. The house was very plainly furnished. The reception room, on the western side, had a set of old lounge-chairs, a tea-table, and two faded rugs. On the eastern side was the dining room which had a large round table and several ordinary wooden chairs. It was all so plain, and I felt a solemn respect for the unpretentious way in which the Premier lived.

Besides Comrade Fan Chin-piao and myself, who had been Premier Chou's personal guards on the Long March, other guests included Comrade Lung Fei-hu, who had worked under Premier Chou for many years. After not seeing each other for more than twenty years we old comrades-in-arms felt the occasion of being reunited in our old leader's home of special intimacy. Comrade Teng poured out the tea for us herself, and warmly offered us refreshments. In chatting with us, she was concerned for our families, asking each of us such questions as: When did you get married? Where did your wife come from? How many children do you have? Are they going to school yet? As we told her about our families and our work, this comrade who had looked after us and helped us twenty-some years earlier nodded with pleasure at our answers and remarked, "Fine, that's good! This is all the result of the victory of our great leader Chairman Mao's revolutionary line."

As we replied to Comrade Teng's kind questions, we also anxiously inquired after the health of the Premier. Comrade Teng told us, "The Premier's health is good, but work keeps him very busy, and he often stays up late into the night." Her words deeply moved us, for over twenty years ago, when I followed him as Vice-Chairman, he had also paid little heed to his own living conditions and physical well-being, work-

ing with such concentration that he often forgot to sleep or eat. Now, after the revolution had triumphed and the people of our country lived in happiness, he maintained the same habits as before, working day and night for the Party and the revolution. What a great spirit this is!

We were still chatting when a telephone call informed us that after the meeting Premier Chou would immediately have to attend another. He could not return home until 1:30. Since it was then already after twelve, Comrade Teng asked us to have lunch first. But how could we think of it? We all wanted to wait until our leader came home, but after another half-hour had passed, someone came to tell us, "The food is ready." Comrade Teng, concerned that we might be hungry, stood up and announced: "Since the Premier has not come home, I am the hostess. We will eat first instead of waiting for him. We can't be sure when he will be able to return." There was nothing for it, we had to eat first. After a few mouthfuls, I thought one dish tasted particularly succulent, but I could not place it. Then Comrade Teng explained that it was young corn-cob fried with chillies and shredded pork. She smiled as she said, "The vegetables were grown by our own labour." Then we realized that both the Premier and Comrade Teng kept a garden in the time they could spare from their busy schedule, growing corn and various vegetables, keeping up the Yenan spirit of **"ample food and clothing through self-reliance,"** a policy which had been personally laid down by our great leader Chairman Mao. After all these years the Premier still maintained the revolutionary style of plain living and hard struggle, continuing the revolutionary spirit of Yenan — a profound lesson for us!

We had already finished lunch when the Premier returned from the meeting. He wore a white shirt and grey trousers,

and looked older than before, with a few more lines on his face and some white hair. His bearing, however, was no less strong than in the old days. His eyes under thick eyebrows still had the keenness and sparkle of those years. As soon as he came in and saw us former "little devils," he immediately shook our hands all round. When he stood before me, I couldn't remember even one sentence of all I had thought out the night before, and it was only when he shook my hand and asked how I was that I inquired, "How is our Premier?"

He replied with a ready smile, "I'm very well," then asked at once with concern, "Have the comrade drivers eaten?" We replied together, "They have, and they've gone to have a rest." Only then did the Premier relax. This small incident illustrates how much he cared for the people and loved them!

As he talked with us, the Premier asked us to sit down, so we all gathered around him and he chatted with us informally as he ate, asking about our home life and our work. Our all being married and with children pleased him, and he said, "Excellent! Things have really changed in the last twenty-some years!"

Noticing the Premier's grey hair, we said to him tenderly, "Premier, your work keeps you so busy, you must pay more attention to rest!"

The Premier laughed as he replied, "How can I rest! There are still many working people in the world who are not liberated. One should rest only after the Chinese people and all the working people lead happy lives." How far-sighted the Premier was! He went on in a gentle but solemn voice, "Under the wise leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, the Chinese revolution has been victorious and the political power of the people is being strengthened daily, but this is only the first step in a very long march!

We must conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism, study Mao Tsetung Thought! We must carry the revolution through to the end!"

The Premier's earnest teachings and sincere hopes were a great inspiration to us, and we made silent vows to learn from the Premier's glorious example, to follow Chairman Mao closely and carry the revolution through to the end! Although I do not drink, I happily drank several glasses of wine on that day when everyone felt so excited, wishing Premier Chou and Comrade Teng good health, and to celebrate the happy reunion of old comrades who had been separated for so many years. The Premier noticed that my face was flushed, and he smiled and said, "You're responsible for the reception of foreign guests and you still cannot drink? Watermelon helps, so you'd better eat a few slices quickly." Premier Chou was the same as in the old days, still showing concern for me even in small matters. After eating a few slices of watermelon, I really did feel better.

We were so engrossed in talking with Premier Chou that we forgot he would be busy in the afternoon too. It was past two o'clock, and the Premier was still chatting with us. Then, at his secretary's reminder: "You will have to receive foreign guests shortly, and you have another meeting to attend at five o'clock," the Premier rose from his chair. "Well, I hope you will all often visit us here."

It had been a very happy reunion, and as we left we had a photograph taken together. Of course, the leaders should stand in the middle, but Premier Chou and Comrade Teng Ying-chao insisted that they stand on the sides and refused to stand in the middle no matter what we said. Small incidents like this from daily life made us feel that the spirit of these higher-level leading comrades of our Party is truly admirable! They are so down-to-earth, so approachable!

We left quite euphoric, and Premier Chou resumed his busy schedule. I kept thinking over and over how I had been back at the side of our veteran leader after more than twenty years, listening once more to him teaching in his earnest, lively way, ". . . this is only the first step in a very long march! We must conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism, study Mao Tsetung Thought! We must carry the revolution through to the end!" The clear and forceful words of Premier Chou En-lai earnestly instructing us rang on in my ears, encouraging me to read and study more conscientiously, make greater effort to raise my consciousness of class struggle and the two-line struggle and of continuing the revolution. I felt inspired, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, to maintain my revolutionary integrity forever and carry the revolution through to the end!

EPILOGUE

On the morning of the 9th of January 1976, when I heard the funeral music being broadcast on the radio over and over again, I thought to myself, which one of our leaders has died? In a moment I heard the words, "The great proletarian revolutionary, outstanding communist fighter and eminent, long-tested Party and state leader of the Chinese people, Comrade Chou En-lai, has passed away. . . ." The words, spoken slowly and solemnly, were like a bolt from the blue. I could not believe my ears. Had our dear Premier Chou really passed away? The words of the obituary announcement of the Party Central Committee, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the State Council could leave no doubt that this sad news, which none of us wished to believe, was true. I felt as if a knife had been twisted in my heart, and tears streamed uncontrollably down my face and onto my clothes. . . .

Forty-one years ago I took part in the world-renowned 25,000-li Long March and had the honour of being Vice-Chairman Chou's guard. During those arduous years of war our beloved Premier Chou spent all of his energy working day and night for the victory of the Chinese revolution under Chairman Mao's leadership. Acting up to his Marxist-Leninist convictions, he was entirely devoted to our great leader Chairman Mao and Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line. His selfless devotion and amazing revolutionary stamina, his unshakable proletarian principles, lofty

revolutionary optimism and his broad vision of a proletarian revolutionary, as well as his fine spirit of hard work and plain living and of keeping in close contact with the masses, were a profound education and deep inspiration for me. Forty-one years had passed since the historical feat of the Long March, but the days and nights spent with Vice-Chairman Chou, China's Premier since the liberation, under Chairman Mao's leadership, crossing over rivers and mountains, his great concern for us and the patient education he gave us were all still fresh in my mind and deeply engraved on my heart.

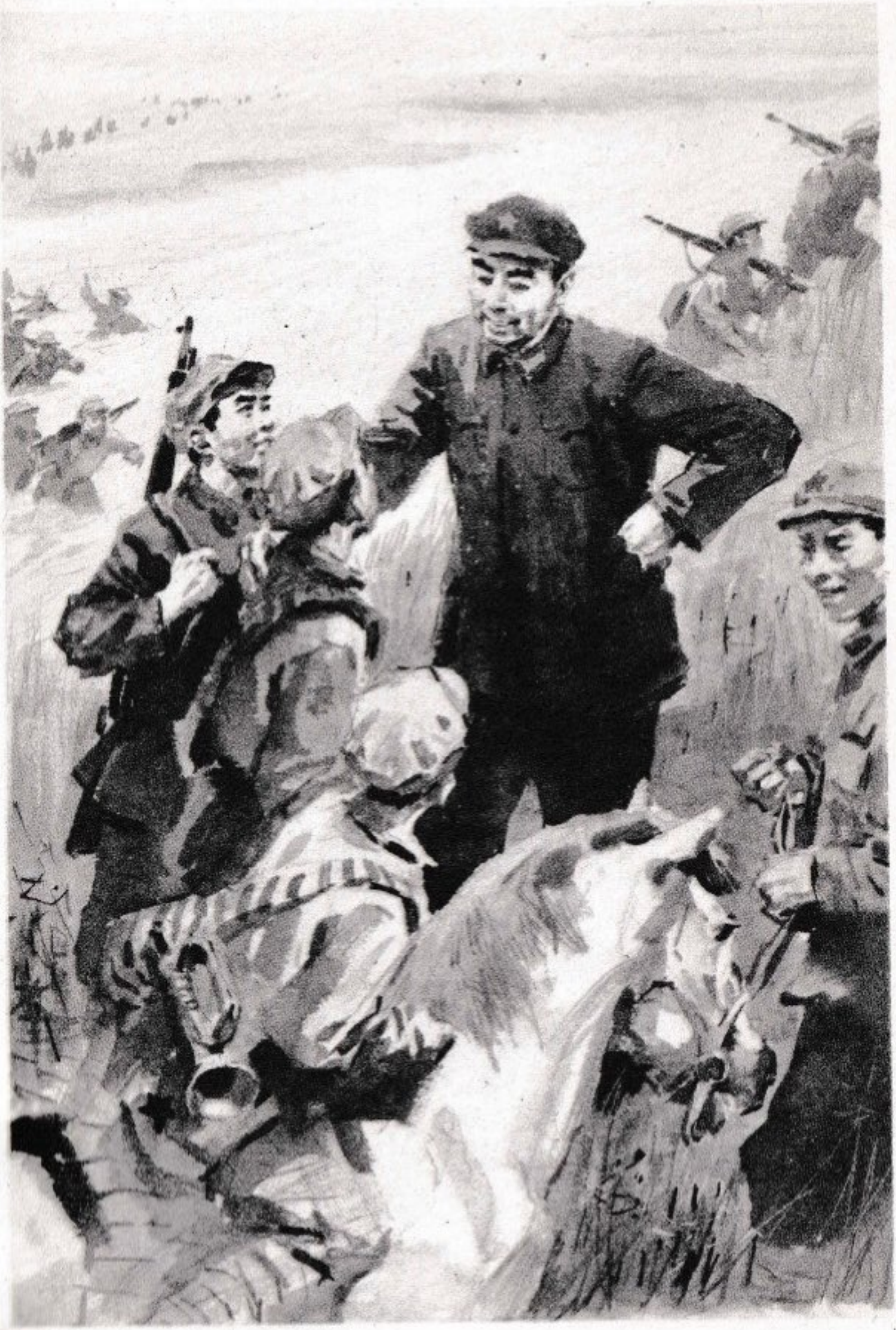
Our beloved Premier Chou has left us, and the whole Party, army and the people of the whole country deeply grieve over his loss. But the Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao "gang of four" wanted to usurp state and Party power. They hated Premier Chou and everyone who loved him. They used every underhand means in a vain attempt to erase his glorious image from the minds of the whole Chinese people. This was their sheer folly. The more frantically they opposed Premier Chou, the dearer he was to the revolutionary people. The Central Committee led by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng carried out Chairman Mao's behests, and broke up the "gang of four" anti-Party clique at one blow. The people and the armed forces of the whole country are delighted by this!

This book contains twenty-five short stories, twenty-two of which concern the Long March, while the pieces, "I Can Wear This One More Winter," "Going Off to Study" and "A Joyful Reunion" have also been included. Let us take Premier Chou's glorious life, which he spent in fighting for communism, as our model and persevere in continuing the revolution under the proletarian dictatorship. With the leadership of the Central Committee headed by our wise leader Chairman Hua, let us thoroughly uncover and criti-

cize the capital crimes of the Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao "gang of four" anti-Party clique and press on to the end with the proletarian revolutionary work begun by the great leader and teacher Chairman Mao!

The Author

November 1976



ROUTES OF THE LONG MARCH

- revolutionary base areas in 1934
- revolutionary base areas in 1935
- revolutionary base areas established by the Red Army during its Western Expedition in 1936
- revolutionary guerrilla base areas and guerrilla zones
- First Front Army
- Second Front Army
- Fourth Front Army
- Sixth Army Group
- 25th Army

NINGSIA
SUIYUAN
KANSU
SHANSI
CHINGHAI
Yellow River
Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia
Wuchichen
Yenan
Huining
Yellow River
SHANTUNG
Latzukou
SHENSI
HONAN
Pahsi
Ahpa
Hupeh-Honan-Shensi
ANHWEI
KIANGSU
SIKANG
Kantzu
Szechuan-Shensi
HUPEH
Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei
Maokung
Yangtze River
Yangtze River
SZECHUAN
CHEKIANG
Luting
Anshunchang
Hunan-Hupeh-Szechuan-Kweichow
Hunan-Hupeh-Kiangsi
Loushankuan
Muhuang
HUNAN
KIANGSI
Fukien-Chekiang-Kiangsi
Tsunyi
Hunan-Kiangsi
Central Base Area
Chiaoche Ferry
KWEICHOW
Juichin
FUKIEN
YUNNAN
KWANGSI
KWANGTUNG
TAIWAN

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